

One Child

by Jessica Drinnon

Adult - 1st place winner

Mooreburg Elementary School

Hawkins County



Kindergarten students love to tell you what they want to be when they grow up. I can tell you first hand that their imaginations run wild, but I often wonder what answer I would

have given when I was five. You see, I'm from a large family. Education was never encouraged or promoted in our home. It was up to us to decide if education was important enough for us to work hard in school. Until I reached fifth grade, I never knew that it was important enough.

When I picked up my final fourth grade report card I was excited to see that I passed; however, it revealed that I would be in Mrs. Bowman's fifth grade. I had heard stories from older siblings about how she had a look and was stern. They said she was mean and told make believe stories about how she would punish kids. I was even told that one child disappeared because he wouldn't get quiet when she was talking. This was just their way of scaring me, but at the time I didn't know any better.

My first day of fifth grade started out like any other. I woke up, got dressed, caught the bus, and waited to meet my teacher. When we entered the classroom she greeted us warmly, and I thought everyone was crazy for saying such things about Mrs. Bowman. Then, we got the look. Some students were running around crazily because they were excited to see their friends after the summer break. The teacher said nothing. She just stood with fixed eyes and arched eyebrows awaiting the response from the frightened little ten year olds that had invaded her classroom. We knew then that she meant business.

The school year crept by without any major incidents. We had the usual classroom disturbances, but nothing that resulted in serious harm. It was the typical science, social studies, Math, and Reading routine. It wasn't until December that I became overwhelmingly excited. They announced that basketball tryouts would be coming up. I couldn't wait to play ball, and I felt certain that I could make the team. I played ball with my older siblings and they taught me some pointers. The bad part about trying out was that Mrs. Bowman would be the one coaching.

I stayed after school on a chilly day and ran drills and shot layups. We had a talk about team work and being a good sport, and we were asked if this was something that we would like to be a part of. I agreed and after review of our basketball skills I was told that I would be a part of the Mooreburg Mustangs team. This allowed me to see the true side of Mrs. Bowman.

Basketball practice showed a new side to Mrs. Bowman. She was caring, intuitive, and encouraging. She always pushed us to do our best. It was more than winning a game for her. It showed her that she could take a group of girls from different backgrounds and build a relationship among them. More importantly, it showed me that there was someone willing to spend their time encouraging me to succeed. Her positive attitude toward athletics led me to see that she also had the same attitude toward academics.

Mrs. Bowman continued encouraging me to do the best I could in whatever task I was given. She would provide extra instruction during her planning time, if needed, to the students who just didn't get it. She always praised us for our work even if it wasn't the greatest. She found ways to show us that she loved us and that we weren't just a group of kids that she would see for 10 months and then pass on to someone else. We were now her kids and for the fifth grade year and remainder of our lives we had someone to turn to for guidance and support.

I left Mrs. Bowman's fifth grade class with a new outlook on school and sports. I went from a shy child with no aspirations to one with hopes and dreams. My senior year of high school I was asked what direction my life would take after graduation. I had worked hard and had earned good enough grades to attend Lincoln Memorial University with several scholarships. My career choice was simple. I would become a teacher just like the fifth grade teacher that I had. I wanted to be someone that could inspire others to take a chance and push past the labels that everyone else had given them. I no longer listened to family members who said I couldn't do it or the ones that said teaching was not a worthwhile career. Instead, I relied on the encouragement I was given from Mrs. Bowman.

I spent countless hours preparing reports, cramming for midterms and finals, preparing lesson plans, and surviving student teaching all to earn my teaching degree. It took four years, but to this day it is one of the best things I have ever done. I graduated in 2009 and was told that jobs were hard to find. I didn't expect to get a teaching job instantly, but I was lucky and was offered a job at Mooresburg Elementary. I was excited to teach at the school I attended as a child. The best part was that I could now be a part of the family where my dream all began. I would be teaching kindergarten in the school where Mrs. Bowman still taught. I couldn't wait to start my career.

The first days of school came and went with many struggles along the way. There were days that I thought I had made the wrong choice, but those were the days that Mrs. Bowman was there to simply say, "You can do it."

There is no doubt that I would not be in the position I am today without the guidance and influence of my fifth grade teacher. It is because of her that I made the decision to teach children and try my best to make a positive impact in their lives. I have been very fortunate to have taught the first three years of my career with Mrs. Bowman. She is the one who started it all for me and this essay is my way of sending her out with a bang. Mrs. Bowman will be retiring at the end of this school year, and I wish her the best. I want her to know that her career has been a successful one and she has truly been a driving force for one little girl's journey.