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22 January 2011

Inspiration

As I sit in the back of the classroom doodling on my paper thinking of what I am going to do with my boyfriend that evening, I look up and realized that my professor has moved ahead three slides and I have missed the entire content of what he said. He was babbling on and on about the inherent chemistry of certain chemicals to bond together and honestly I did not care. What did the rule of the octet have to do with anything important in my life? Oh, the answer is absolutely nothing. It was about week four into the quarter and I realized I had learned nothing more than I had already known in week one. This monotonous task of sitting and watching slide after slide and copying down exactly what each bullet point said was not spiking my interest in anyway and for this reason I found no inspiration to learn what the man was trying to teach me. As I progress through my years as a student I find that there are certain attributes and teaching styles that make some teachers stand out as more inspirational than others.

A teacher does not have to be an inspiration for every student every moment of the day, rather, for every student there is that one moment, brief second that sticks out in his or her memory as their most powerful moment shared with a teacher. Where a teacher has inspired them to not give up, to keep going, or have faith in the talent that they have. In Kathleen Parker’s “A Sprig of Verbena and the Gifts of a Great Teacher” she talks about the power of an inspirational teacher. That teacher for Parker was a man by the name of James Grasque. The moment of inspiration happened one day while in his English class. Kathleen was called to the board and asked to identify a part of a sentence. With her response the class erupted into laughter because the answer was wrong. Instead of just telling the class to be quiet and leaving Kathleen embarrassed, Mr. Grasque says something to stop the class and help to rebuild Parker’s confidence. He looks at the class and says, “Don’t you ever laugh at her again. She can out-write any of you any day of the week.” Parker took this compliment and helped it to guide her life. She eventually became a famous author all because of this one teacher who inspired her. At her most vulnerable moment standing in front of her piers he gave her the confidence she needed to keep going and this is why she believed he was her inspiring teacher.

In concurrence with Parker I believe that in a single instance a teacher’s actions can force a student to view them as inspirational. There are many different views on what qualifies a teacher to be “inspirational”, but to me inspiration, my verbena, came in the form of my twelfth grade English teacher. I had been told my whole life that I am a horrible writer and that my dreams of being not only a journalist, but a sport’s journalist were farfetched. However, Ms. Foldy thought differently. I had no confidence turning in my first paper of the year, I reluctantly handed it over to Foldy. It was a creative writing piece exploring the mind of a teenager who was contemplating abortion. About a week later Foldy called me to her desk, immediately my mind was racing with the thoughts of all of her critiques and the bad grade I most likely would have received on the paper. When I timidly reached her desk she asked me to sit down. In that moment she told me I had a gift that she did not see often. We then conversed about what I could do to work on the piece to make it better.

However, during the entire conversation my mind could not stop replaying the first sentence she said. In that moment she turned my life around. From that second on I began to love writing. I began to realize that if I tried hard enough I could do what I wanted to do and be a journalist. Ms. Foldy inspired me with one sentence to never give up on my dream and what I wanted. Throughout the rest of my senior year I went to her to ask her questions about college and about my future career path.

I think that every teacher has the capability to be an inspirational teacher. Teachers have a sense of compassion that they are able to share with their students. I believe that an inspirational teacher knows how to reach out to his or her students and give them individual attention. They get to know their students not only in the classroom, but on a personal level so that they are able to relate to them. Inspirational teachers are able to motivate their children to learn the material that is put in front of them. As an inspirational teacher you are able to make class work fun and entertaining so that students are “roped into learning”. An inspirational teacher is able to take you as a student in your weakest moments and make you become a stronger learner and person after them. They force you to better yourself in education and as a person.

So as I sit in chemistry wondering what my teacher had taught for not only the past half hour but for the past four weeks, I thought of Ms. Foldy saying that I had talent in English that I never knew I had, and pondered if I had talent writing who was to say that I was not gifted at chemistry as well. That night I went home and cracked open my text book and read every chapter we were covering. I began to understand the rule of the octet. And it was not because my chemistry teacher told me to it was because I was inspired to learn by Ms. Foldy just like Kathleen was inspired by her teacher Mr. Grasque.