

T. Davis

Of all the people in my life, the one person that has inspired me the most is...

The first semester of my senior year I was a teacher's assistant in a first grade classroom at Franklin Elementary in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Being in that room full of seven- and eight-year-olds not only solidified my decision to become a teacher, but a certain child also opened my eyes to a different light.

Among the group of 21 students, one in particular really stood out to me – I'll call him Steven. Steven was a young boy who sought out attention. He wore the same Green Bay Packers sweatshirt almost every day and always needed me to tie his worn out shoes for him after he changed out of his winter boots, which were two sizes too small. He always seemed to start trouble with other students. After months of not fitting in at any of the tables, he was moved to his own desk in the corner of the room. The teacher would ignore his stories and comments when they were out of context, and threw out the flowers he would make for her out of paper towels after snack time. To limit his number of comments, he was given a small stack of poker chips in the morning and every time he shared something, one chip was taken away. He was desperate for attention.

It brightened my morning when I saw him come in from the playground, running up to me smiling, exposing his silver crowned tooth. He would throw his arms around my waist and say, `Good morning, Taylor!' I saw the happiness in his eyes daily as I helped him tie his shoes and get his work done. He took pride in those paper towel flowers that he soon started giving to me. I took them home along with pictures he drew and cards he wrote to me and I keep them in my room.

Steven was the student that showed me that being a teacher isn't just to provide an education, but also to make a difference in these kid's lives – to help them gain confidence, the determination to succeed, and also happiness. For this reason, of all the people in my life, he is the one that has inspired me the most. Steven showed me that when kids don't get the attention they need at home, they seek it out elsewhere. They see negative attention as better than none at all.

Fortunately this classroom had only one Steven. I know that there are schools full of classrooms with students like Steven – in the inner cities and less fortunate communities. After completing my education I am motivated to help kids like Steven and be more than just a teacher. I plan to enrich my student's lives and be someone they look up to. If you ask my future students when they grow up who their role model was, it is to my greatest hope that they say, 'Ms. Davis'.