

She Was the Turning Point in My Life

Teaching is a journey of the heart. Read how a teacher turned a student's life around with positive expectations in the **Going Beyond** folder for Chapter 6 at EffectiveTeaching.com.

Teaching is a journey of the heart. Some days your heart is full of spirit and is uplifted; other times your heart feels trampled upon and crushed. So how do you overcome being overwhelmed and get on the road to recovery?

Our advice is, "Try Your Very Best." If you reach just one student, your entire teaching career will have been rewarding. You may never know which student it will be. Often the one who you think you never reached will be *the* one who comes back some day to thank you. So don't give up.

**Your legacy as a teacher is to make one difference,
one student at a time.**

Try Your Very Best

We found this in a Farmer's Insurance magazine in 1984 and kept it because it spoke to our hearts.

I write this in tribute to Mildred Grote, who, in 1962, was the sixth-grade teacher and librarian at Public School 94 in the Bronx, New York. We used to claim her heavy makeup kept her perpetual smile in place. And smile she did—even in our class. This was no ordinary sixth-grade class; this was the Educable Mentally Retarded (EMR) class, the last way station for the trouble-makers, problem children, and lost souls of P.S. 94.

I was the only girl from my fifth-grade class to be placed in that class. I lost all of my school friends from previous grades because no one wanted to associate with a 'dummy'; consequently I was sullen and withdrawn.

After the usual barrage of Iowa Skills Tests, Miss Grote informed me she was going to seek my transfer out of her class. "You don't belong here, my dear," she said, and began a year-long losing battle to get me out. In the interim, I was sent to the library daily on special assignments. While my classmates played games, I read, wrote book reports, did extra work assignments, and research projects.

My resentment—already considerable—was increased tenfold when she would smile and say, "This isn't good enough, dear. You are not working to your potential. Rewrite this, and do another one as well."

I was never transferred, and perhaps that was the best thing that could have happened to me. "You can be anything you want, my dear," she said, "if you try your very best."

I will be completing my Ph.D. soon, and I can see her smile and hear her saying, "I told you so, my dear."

Mildred Grote was quite a teacher. She saw potential and kept trying her very best to influence and inspire Judith to achieve her potential. But there's more to the story.

We began to wonder (as you sometimes do with your former students!) whatever happened to Judith Liu. We managed to track her down and the following is the rest of the story. She shares:

She Was the Turning Point in My Life (continued)

I thought you might be interested in a postscript to that article that was written in 1984.

I graduated from the Ph.D. program in Sociology at the University of California San Diego in 1985. I was fortunate enough to obtain a teaching position at the University of San Diego, where I have been for the past sixteen years.

In 1991, I was awarded the California Professor of the Year award from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE).

In USD's publication about the award, I mentioned how Miss Grote was such an inspiration to me. Miss Grote was a turning point in my life; without her dedication and hard work, I would never have succeeded.

–Dr. Judith Liu

The Significance of a Teacher

Research consistently shows that educational fads and innovations are not the major factors for improving student achievement. **The only factor that is able to consistently impact student achievement is the significance of a teacher.**