



A Special Message from the Graduate:

December, 2011

This is more than "just another Graduation Announcement". It includes a very special thank you to some, hopefully a message of "inspiration and motivation" to others, and a declaration to a few (and you know who you are) that I accomplished my goals and realized my dream of becoming a teacher despite "your predictions of my failure". I apologize for the length, but I would be remiss if I did not render this to paper.

I'll start with the very special thank you's. To Billie Calvery and your amazing staff, what can I say, but thank you for "unlocking the doors of learning" for me. What you and your staff do every day is simply amazing. I cannot imagine the joy you must have in witnessing what I'm sure are daily "light bulb" moments for your clients. I look forward to the privilege of creating "light bulb" opportunities for my future students. Besides my mom (and that's just what Mom's do), you and your staff were the first to ever believe in me - to believe that with a lot of hard work and some "handy tools" (given to me by you) that I would and could succeed. And, I DID!!! On a side note, even though I told you that "I don't do math", I really can do math. But it must remain our secret because I have to maintain the image I created . . ."I don't do math"!!! ☺

Thank you seems inadequate, but so very thankful I am that our paths crossed, Mrs. G. You were the first educator in the public education system that believed in me and allowed me to believe in myself. You inspired me. You lit a flame inside me that burns even brighter today and the reason I aspired to become a teacher. You made a difference in my life. Now it is my turn to make a difference in another child's life. It is my turn to "pay it forward". I will never forget you.

To Mike Jeffers. Again, thank you is not enough. You were the first administrator to believe in me, and my ability to accomplish my goals. Thank you for standing by me when other instructors had already "given up" on me and "sold me out". For the first time in my public education "career", I felt that I had someone else besides my Mom that I could count on and seek help from without criticism or ridicule. Please know that you made a profound difference in the life of "this" child. I promise to pass "it" on.

Professor Mike Hills. Without you, December 17, 2011 would be just another ordinary Saturday. Without you I would still be telling people, "I don't do math", and it would be true. Without you I would not have had the opportunity to teach math to my first and my third grade students (as a student teacher). Without you, I would not have had those countless "light bulb" math moments. Professor Hills, you are an AMAZING instructor. Anyone that can change my "motto" from "I don't do math" to "I do math", is incredible. I am forever indebted to you for "unlocking the math door" for me. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Many non-believers have crossed my path the last 23 years, but a few deserve special recognition. To my third grade teacher, Mrs. McHenry, I am sure it will be a great disappointment to you to learn that I "don't work at McDonalds". In fact, I have never worked at McDonald's or any other fast food restaurant. I have only worked with and been teaching children from my very first job out of high school to this very day. Don't think that your hurtful and negative words and attitude were wasted - quite the contrary. Actually, your words served to motivate and inspire me every day to prove you wrong.

To my "coordinator", who will remain anonymous, you, too, were an "inspiration" to me. Your mean-spirited statement to me, my Mom and others that I wasn't capable of learning math served to motivate me every day to prove you wrong. I don't carry around a calculator to perform math functions because I'm incapable of doing math. I have, however, been known to carry around a calculator - a graphing calculator to be exact to work high-level algebraic equations. I do use a calculator at times to help

balance the checkbook or keep track of how much money I'm spending on groceries while I'm at the store. So technically, I guess you were right. And, you were dead wrong about me being incapable of doing math. I can do math, even without a calculator. And, the "miracles" don't stop there. I am capable of teaching math to others – and have done so. You served as a great role model for how I never want to act as a teacher.

One last thank you. I am blessed to have the supportive Mom and Dad (aka PaPa). Many years ago, I asked my Mom "why school always had to be so hard for me" (and not for others). Fighting back tears while drying mine (and giving me one of her "everything's going to be ok" hugs), she told me she didn't know why I was 'made this way'. She went on to tell me she was sure I was "made" special because God must have some very special plans for me and I just didn't know what they were yet. She was right. I did not know then, but I do now. He made me special and he "made me struggle" because he wanted me to know how my future students that were "struggling" in school felt. I was being molded to be the best teacher possible.

Mom and Papa, thank you for **never** giving up on me. Thank you for the "tough love" moments and telling me to "suck it up". Without them, I might not have survived the numerous failures I have had. Thank you for all those "everything's going to be ok" hugs. Without those, I'm sure that December 17, 2011 would be just another ordinary Saturday. Instead, it is my graduation day. A day I've been working my tail off for and dreaming about for a very long time. **Thank you for "being the wind beneath my wings."** December 17, 2011 is your day to celebrate, too.

To each of you...If you received an invitation to this special day, it's because I want to share my special day with you. I know that this is a very busy time of year for each of you, but I would be so very honored if you were able to join me at Emporia State University on Saturday, December 17, 2011 to witness your hand in making "a dream come true".

In closing, I share with you one of my favorite quotes: *"One Hundred Years from now it will not matter what kind of car I drove, what kind of house I lived in, how much money was in my bank account, nor what my clothes looked like. But the world may be a better place because I was important in the life of a child."*

*With Gratitude,
Crystal Leigh (Pater) Davis*