

Dear Fabulous Fifth Graders,

We spent all year getting to know each other and communicating through our weekly letters. Therefore, I thought it fitting to write you one final letter. Let me begin by saying, it has been my absolute pleasure being your teacher this year. I have seen every one of you grow –not just physically or even academically, but most importantly I have seen your hearts grow. I have witnessed every one of you display compassion and generosity towards each other, staff members at the school, and even me. As you know, this year has posed some personal challenges for me, but no matter what was going on in my life, I could always count on warm smiles, big hugs, and kind words from all of you. I will never forget how special you made me feel on my birthday or the heartfelt condolences I received after I lost my dad not too long ago. Never forget popularity and academic successes should never come before kindness and compassion, and if I helped instill that into you even a little bit this year, I consider that a success.

There were certain phrases I repeated frequently throughout this year. One of them being “progress not perfection”. Those are words that I want you to take with you as you continue on your educational journey. You should never feel that perfection is the only measure of success. Struggle is proof that you are trying. As long as you persevere and learn from your mistakes, you will continue to make forward progress and that to me is how you should gauge your success. Just like we have talked about with growth mindset—it’s all about the power of yet! It’s not that you can’t do it, it’s that you can’t do it YET! With hard work and perseverance you can do anything!

As we wrapped up this crazy year with digital learning, one of your last assignments was write a letter to upcoming 5th graders. I laughed outloud at the advice you gave to students who will have me as a teacher next year. You really do have me pegged! Common themes in most of the letters included— Ms. Whitus LOVES her coffee and she loves dogs! Both very true observations. And pet peeves included things like DO NOT talk while she is teaching a lesson or ask for directions she just gave because you weren’t listening. But one of my favorite things that I saw repeated was don’t be mean to each other by laughing or calling each other names—she DOES NOT like that. It is my hope that our classroom was one where you felt loved and safe to take risks every day.

In the spirit of the last letter I decided to write down some of my observations about you! You love when recess gets extended because it’s just such a beautiful day and the fact that you can go to the bathroom and eat your snack whenever you want (within reason). You love being the role models of the school, demonstrating to the younger students how things are done here at The Hill. And I know you really LOVE hugs every day as you walk into the classroom in the morning and before you leave in the afternoon (However, to be fair I think I love them just as much 😊). You enjoy music playing, being able to work around the room, grudgeball, writing on your desk, and some of you really like entertaining us with dances from tic toc, hydroflasks, metal straws, and saving turtles.

As you move on to middle school, no matter which one, you will always be a Champion! Furthermore, once you’ve been in my class you will always be one of “my kids”. So, please I encourage you to stay in touch. Email me or stop by whether it’s because you want to let me know what’s going on in your life, you are struggling and need someone to talk to, or you just need one of my world famous hugs! I never get tired of hearing from former students and learning about what they are up to in life!

In conclusion, I encourage you to DREAM! Don’t be afraid to take risks and even fail because beyond that is where you will find your greatest successes.

In the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Do not follow where the path may lead. Go, instead, where there is no path and leave a trail."

I love every single one of you and look forwards to hearing about of your future successes.

Love your favorite 5th grade teacher,

Ms. Whitus