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Mrs. Martin ~ by Megan Stachnik

My son Alex had trouble with school until the most effective teacher I have ever had the pleasure of meeting took him under her wing. I will be forever grateful to Mrs. Martin for everything she did for him.

Mrs. Martin was a retired army officer. She was teaching elementary school kids because she genuinely loved what she did. She saw traits in Alex that reminded her of her own kids and hand picked him to be in her class that year because she knew she could help him. Alex's biggest problem was staying on task, and she created and kept to a strict schedule with the kids so that they knew what they were supposed to be doing every minute of the day. Alex is really meticulous about things and generally falls into a type-A personality. For him, that strict routine was a huge game changer and just what he needed to keep him on task.

My son also has a talking problem, as in talks non-stop including while he's asleep. Every teacher thus far has constantly tried to get him to be quiet and has punished him for his running mouth. Mrs. Martin's daughter had the same problem, so she had seen how most teachers considered it a distraction and would come down on talkative students. She was a huge advocate of channeling that glibness towards more productive things. Instead of giving Alex opportunities to speak out of turn in class, she would set him up as a "mentor" to students who needed extra attention so he could talk his head off explaining how to do an assignment without interrupting the class. It was brilliant!

Another huge reason I fell in love with her was her push on reading. Alex didn't like reading much because he never had anything to read that interested him. Once she noticed this, she brought him some books from her kids' collections that were their favorites at his age. The books were a little advanced for him at the time, but she helped him through the tough, and he found some that he genuinely enjoyed. He quickly became addicted to "Diary of a Wimpy Kid" books and a few others and started to devour every one he could get ahold of. With Mrs. Martin's help, we created a reward system to keep him reading as much as possible, and it's still a major success!

Most importantly, her absolute love and passion was to help these kids become everything they potentially could be. No one in her class was deemed a troublemaker. No one in her class was held up above the others nor was anyone left behind. She cared so much for each and every one of her students and made it a point to find what worked for all of them and to get their families on board with how best to help them succeed with other teachers in the future. We had a very close relationship with her, and I imagine she was the same with all of the parents of her students.

Mrs. Martin was a one-in-a-million teacher who turned my child from a difficult child to the top reader of the school and the student of the month twice in the year after. It was all thanks to the solid foundation she laid for Alex and for the freedom to be himself that she cultivated. Never has a teacher been more effective.