

Truly Educated

“There’s always one in each class.” Or at least that’s what I was told coming into my internship year. “One that will make you want to pull your hair out.”

For me, that was Jacob*.

Jacob had a history. He shouted out in class, got into fights on the playground, and was constantly in and out of the principal’s office. He was no different once he reached my class.

At the beginning of the school year I threw myself into creating behavior management plans, contacting parents, and reaching out to the school counselor. However, nothing seemed to change. And soon I was at my breaking point.

“I hate school!” He yelled out in the middle of Math one day, “I just wish my parents would pick me up and I’d never have to come back here. Ever!”

A hush fell over the classroom as every student turned to look at Jacob. I felt a lump form in my throat. Frustration, anger, and disappointment all welled up within me. Without even realizing it, I began to cry. *How could he hate being here? Did he know how hard I was working to help him? What I was doing for him?!*

I went home that evening and I prayed to know what to do. Something needed to change. But what?

And then a clear message came to me. *He needs to know he is loved.*

David O. McKay once shared, “Wisdom is the right application of knowledge; and true education...is the application of knowledge to the development of a noble and Godlike character.” In my time at the McKay school, I learned repeatedly about the effects of teacher-student relationships on student success. I had known this fact for years before I became an Intern. I had the *knowledge*. However, as David O. McKay shares, wisdom is not just knowing something. It is the desire and ability to *act* on what we know.

With this understanding, I began exploring the character and attributes of God- a God who loves us and sees us as worthy individuals, not as problems to be managed or fixed. Through my reflection, I realized that I had been so focused on changing Jacob’s behavior that I had neglected to truly love my student.

I spoke with Jacob one on one after this realization. I shared that I wanted to be a better teacher for him. We began a positive reinforcement plan that we worked on together. I started greeting him specifically each morning. We planned lunches in the classroom that he could invite his friends to. I began to really notice and praise his good behavior. Now, several months later he has completely transformed. He comes to school smiling. He is kind to his classmates. He contributes to our lessons.

But loving Jacob didn’t just change him-it changed me. Through this experience, I came closer to, and became more like, my Savior and Heavenly Father. In the words of David O. McKay, I have been truly educated.

***Name has been changed**

Word Count: 500