

In a week-long class this week about teaching, we reflected on teachers who have impacted and inspired us. We did this to understand what makes a great teacher. An excellent teacher is more than someone who plans great lessons. It's about their presence, and how they interact with their students.

I reflected on my 5th grade teacher, Ms. Gurney. 5th grade was a great year, thanks to her. Our classroom was fun, united, relaxed, and challenging. When I thought of her, so many memories came to mind.

Although we were used to referring to our teachers with Ms. or Mr, we began affectionately calling her Gurney. I kept calling her Ms. Gurney at first, but soon joined in.

After lunch one day, we came to tell her about another teacher who had been rude and unreasonable at lunch. She laughed with us, because it was ridiculous. This made me feel like she was on our side and looking out for us.

During snack time she would read to us, and when we begged her to keep reading, she almost always relented. School was still challenging, but it was also fun and relaxed. It was a place for joy as well as learning.

After reading the book *Wonder*, we found out there was a movie. And we wanted to watch it. We said, "What if we went to see it in the movie theater!"

Gurney replied, "Make a slideshow," so we did. We all worked together, everybody participating, to create a presentation for the principal and assistant principal. We talked about what we had learned and why seeing the movie would be valuable. When the whole grade went to see it, it was a proud and fun day. It taught me that it was possible to make wonderful things happen in school. I just had to think outside the box about how it could be made possible, and simply ask. I think this has stayed with me, even for example, if I'm having a hard time in class and I need some air. It reminds me to ask to take a lap of the hallway. That shouldn't be unreasonable, I just need to ask.

Gurney made a difference in my life because not only did she challenge me academically, but she made school an enjoyable place during 5th grade. My class was a united and joyful community. She built individual relationships with each of us, and we trusted her. If I were to become a teacher one day, I would try my best to do the same for my students.