

Why we do what we do.

My very first job was about 15 years ago. I was excited, eager, just out of Uni (you know the type). Took over a class of grade 4s from a woman who had taught for 35 years, was planning to retire in June, but couldn't make it because this class was SO AWFUL (and they really were-- unreal--they were actually known throughout the district for their *remarkable* behaviour.)

So in I went from Spring Break through to the end of the year. Blah blah blah, they were horrid, but I loved every one of them.

Saw The One the other day buying a coffee at Tim Horton's. He'd be about 23, 24 now I guess. He looked over at me as we passed on the sidewalk, and gave me That Look. The Look teachers know. The Look that says "I know you, but I bet you don't remember me..." But I did remember this boy.

"Lukas?"

Puzzled look

"Do you recognize me?"

"You look familiar....." then when I say 'Grade 4', he remembers.

Usually it's the other way around, they come up to you, and you haven't a clue who this 6'4" kid is.

This boy, though, didn't write, couldn't read when I took the class, was about 80 pounds of anger and not much else. By the end of that year, he would write me little stories-- about 4 sentences long. I still have one. And I remember it, to this day, without having to look at the copy I kept. It read:

“One day, I won a million dollars. I bought my wife a car”

At the end of the year, his mom gave me a card in which she wrote "You are the only teacher Lukas has ever taken to".

But I worried about him every time I saw him "hanging around town" after that, or whenever I thought of him.

On this day, however, when he realized who I was, he reached out to shake my hand, and went on to tell me he was doing really well-- working for a guy doing drywall, and driving a car that I could tell he saved money up to buy-- ie, 10 years old, but well cared for and it's his, not the leasing company's. He had a few "prison"-style tattoos on his fingers, and clearly had had some tough times (perhaps not hard time in prison, but you know what I mean)

I told him I was so glad to see he was doing well. He smiled and thanked me and said "Yeah I am"

I was sobbing (not just a few tears in the eyes like right now as I retell it), but full-on sobbing by the time I got in my car. It was a message I desperately needed right at that moment-- a reminder of what I do and why