

Great Teachers and Great Kids!
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It seems it was just yesterday (code words for I am “gaining in life experience”) that Mr. Ferrone, my sixth grade teacher, stopped what was always an amazing classroom experience of discussion, creativity and risk to share words that may not have made sense to a sixth grader at the time. It seemed Mr. Ferrone rarely sat or even took time for a full breath. So when on that memorable day he grabbed a stool, moved it to the center of our non-traditional room, and spoke in a slow but emotional voice, we knew important words would follow...and they did! As I recall, his voice almost cracked as he said, “You kids are just amazing, I struggle to find words to describe how smart, energetic, and creative you are each day.” He went on for some time; for a sixth grader it was almost a bit awkward to see this amazing teacher whom we all adored teetering on the brink of emotion...but we listened intently to his descriptions; after all he thought we were pretty cool kids, and what sixth grader (or senior, for that matter) wouldn’t relish the moment. His reaching for another breath didn’t slow his measure; in fact it was what he said next that we all took to heart... “I am confident that each of you will accomplish amazing things in your lives...you will win awards, raise kids smarter than you, have jobs that create new products and solve problems that adults today just couldn’t get to or have the perspective to see...yes, you all will find a path that will make me proud so many years later!”

My mind’s eye remembers how his voice quivered near the end of that flattering and motivating statement...as all great teachers do, he had touched us forever and we knew it! As a sixth grader Mr. Ferrone seemed like a “full-grown” man with the same “life experience” I described at the start...Mr. Ferrone was actually a whopping 24...ahh perspective.

Last year I was able to attend the retirement party for Mr. Ferrone, and as you would expect, when he took the microphone to speak, his focus was once again on how kids today will make all the difference. Those kids are our kids, and yes they have their “moments,” but from what I get to see in classrooms and at school events, our future is in capable hands...they will make us proud...and every student’s own personal Mr. Ferrone!