

My all-time inspiration is my private oboe professor, Tonya Mertz. Her attitude exemplifies a sort of motherly nature that I have always appreciated among the people I am closest to, an encouraging, gentle sort that states expectations and is very slow to anger. Her effectiveness is evident in every student that has passed through her private lessons or classroom. In my years at UMary, I have never heard anyone speak an ill word against her. I strive to become a teacher that warrants respect based on personality and demeanor. I want my students to feel comfortable enough as if they were talking to someone on the same level as them while still realizing the professional relationship we hold; many adolescents are responsive to being spoken to as an adult and an individual, and they should always be respected like one.

From more of a classroom standpoint instead of private instruction, my favorite classroom teachers, both secondary and university, had slightly similar techniques in terms of relationship building. They knew how to manage a classroom without excessive yelling or punishment, saving their angry voices for when it really counted, and disappointing them felt like a punch in the chest. They let us know they cared. One of my old history teachers was particularly responsive to my inquisitiveness and allotted some class time for discussion instead of shutting me down. Not many things feel worse in the classroom than when a teacher shuts down your curiosity, making you feel unintelligent or unnecessary. He was always kind and gentle, asking about students' days and making his class informational and not overly tough to pass; being a basketball coach, the rare times he raised his voice, it felt terrifying, and everyone knew he meant business.

My 5-12 band conductor was actually part of the reason I chose my college majors. He planted the musical seeds in my mind that I did not know I needed, starting with seeing the talent and responsibility I held to handle a more difficult instrument, then further finding me opportunities by simply showing me outside-of-class sources such as Tonya herself and International Music Camp, and also taking time out of his day to help me prepare for contests. I am now finishing up my Oboe performance degree while regularly studying under Tonya, have spent a collective 13 weeks at IMC, loved every minute of it and wanting to return later as an employee, and I made it to every North Dakota honor band from the seventh grade to my senior year of high school, a good chunk of them being awarded with principal chair of my section.

One more set of notable teachers are a few of my UMary professors that have similar reflections of the ones mentioned above. They tell stories in their class, find creative ways to engage with us, laugh with us, build communities among us, let us know their door is open when needed, and have gone so far as to offer a place of refuge during holidays in their own home in case some of the students were stuck on campus during Thanksgiving for example. Their anger is rare and always warranted when it occurs, used as a sort of technique to wake us up when we really need it.

Overall, I find similar patterns between the teachers I love and respect. They have kind demeanors, are slow to upset, use appropriate humor, let us know what their expectations are, focus on building genuine relationships in not only their words but their actions, give off a 'friend' vibe that is still kept entirely professional because the line of where it ends is clear, and engage in letting their students grow in their own, unique and creative ways. If I could be half as good of educators as the teachers mentioned above, I would feel very accomplished.