



Dear Mrs. Smith

By Educator Barnes – May 30, 2019

There are many good teachers, but great teachers are harder to find. The school year in the Metropolitan School District of Washington Township came to a close last Thursday, and I can wholeheartedly proclaim my identical twin sons had a great teacher, Mrs. Victoria Smith.

My sons have been in separate classes since the second semester of PreK-4, but for second grade my husband and I, with the support of the school's administration, decided to place them in the same class for second grade. There was a possibility based on their academic data that our sons might get into the Compass program, which is the track for gifted and talented students. The problem was there is only one classroom per grade for Compass when the program begins in third grade.

We were worried if both of our sons qualified for the program it would be hard for them to acclimate to being in class with each other again on top of the rigorous demands. In third grade, Compass students cover both third and fourth-grade curriculum which puts them a year ahead academically. We did not know how our sons would thrive in that environment on top of being with each other. Part of the reason we decided to split them up after winter break in PreK-4 is that one of my sons expressed he needed a break from his brother.

Knowing these factors, we told the school's principal we needed the best teacher she had in second grade. Then, my husband and I prayed hard for the teacher because we know our sons are smart, but we also know how they can get on each other's nerves and how they can disrupt a learning setting due to their behavior at times.

I was also worried because my sons are teacher's kids. I am a teacher, and I can tell you that teachers can be the most difficult parents; some teachers treat teacher-parents and their children differently. Moreover, one of my sons had two teachers that did not know how to work with him. He dreaded attending school. In the back of my mind, I had those negative experiences and had a constant fear of those experiences happening again. To make matters worse, I'm an education writer who has been critical about teachers in some of my pieces. Through the grapevine, I have been told that a few teachers fear they will appear in a piece I write for a bad reason.

Today, I am here to state that Victoria Smith is featured in this article for all the right reasons. My sons love her, and she is the reason I know they will enter into third grade, in separate classes, better than who they were when they entered her class in second grade. Our sons did not make the cut for Compass, but we are okay with that. I might write about why in another piece. Below, I want to share with all of my readers why my husband and I want to publicly thank Mrs. Smith.

Dear Mrs. Smith,

Thank you for being who you are. My husband and I were extremely nervous about placing our twin sons in the same class. We live with them, so we know how they can drive each other crazy. We were also concerned because we knew they needed to learn how to respond differently in difficult situations or when they were frustrated. You were up to the task.

We loved the flexible seating arrangement you had in your classroom. One of our sons had previously gotten into trouble for wanting to stand and complete work. We were glad in your classroom, your focus was on if students completed the work not whether they did it in a seat or at a desk.

Each day, even each hour, was a new beginning. Even if our sons stormed out of your room, threw an item, or were fighting in the hall over a library book, you always found a way to make them feel like you had not given up on them. You made them feel they could turn it around and do better and be better.

The activities you created were engaging and our sons came home and told us all about them. They loved the learning opportunities you provided.

As parents, we appreciated the constant communication whether that was about behavior, grades, school activities, or community activities. You always kept us in the know.

Before the school year started, you came to our house with your student teacher (she's lucky to learn from you) and made a point to get to know our boys and us. We didn't know how the school year would progress after that meeting, but we can say when we told Mrs. Parquet to place them in the best second-grade class she had, she did.

We wish you much relaxation and rest this summer. You more than deserve it especially after surviving the Barnes twins. Yes, we are still secretly hoping you will get moved to third grade.

Thanks again for making a difference in our children's life. We will never forget you.

-Jermaine and Shawnta Barnes