



# Canton Public School District

"TEACHERS OF THE YEAR" ISSUE

December /January 2014

- "A Good teacher Explains ... A Superior teacher Demonstrates ... A GREAT teacher Inspires." Unknown

## Tiger Talk



### "DISTRICT TEACHER OF THE YEAR" 2013-14



McNeal Elementary Principal Shalondia Washington , Alpha Myers, Superintendent Dwight Luckett, Sr.

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### McNeal Elementary "Teacher of the Year" 2013-14

**Canton Public Schools salute Ms. Alpha Myers as the "District's Teacher of the Year."** Superintendent Dwight Luckett, Sr., commends Myers for her commitment and dedication to inspiring, motivating, and empowering students to reach for the stars.

**Alpha Myers** is a first grade teacher at McNeal Elementary School. A native of Canton and 1996 graduate of Canton High School, Myers considers it an honor and a privilege to work for Canton Public Schools. Throughout her 13 years in the district, she has strived and continues to strive to live by the

## *“District Teacher of the Year”*



principles of relating, motivating, and celebrating. The words of an unknown author have been the source of her inspiration, “The best teachers teach from the heart and not a book.” She holds dear to her heart the words of encouragement, advice, and the counsel of the educational giants that she has encountered throughout her life. Thus, her journey has not only been influenced by a family of educators but also a host of inspiring teachers, administrators, and co-workers.

Myers greatly enjoys and values the experiences that she has gained in her career and in life. She received a Bachelor’s Degree from Tougaloo College; a Master’s Degree from Belhaven University and is currently working on an Educational Specialist Degree. However, her most rewarding



educational experiences are inside of the school building. She attempts to seize each day as a learning experience.

Myers’ mission in life is simple; serve God by serving others. Rooted by Christ and in Christ, Alphaia intends to continue her journey of living and learning in hopes to embrace the legacy that has been left for her.

Myers will compete in the State’s “Teacher of the Year” Competition.









# *“District Teacher of the Year” 1st Runner Up/ Porter Middle School “Teacher of the Year”*



**Jessica Johnson** is a Science teacher at Huey L. Porter Middle School in Canton, MS. She has a bachelor's degree in Psychology from Millsaps College and a Masters in Education from Mississippi College. Along with her educational accomplishments, she has enjoyed 10 years of introducing kids to the world of science and helping kids exceed their individual learning capabilities.

Prior to becoming a teacher, Mrs. Johnson intended to achieve her childhood dream of becoming a doctor and was accepted into the Pennsylvania College of Optometry. While making the decision to attend, she felt as though life was pulling her into another direction and decided to explore the avenue of teaching. During college, she had been encouraged to major in education as it was clear that she had a remarkable ability to effectively explain and teach very difficult material to others. Intrigued by the calling of a different career and helping to mold young lives, Mrs. Johnson accepted her first position as a teacher at New Hope Christian School. At New Hope, she was able to experience the rewards and struggles of a teaching career and solidified her commitment to educating the youth of Mississippi. In 2008, she accepted a position with Canton Public School District and has sought to break through any barriers to educational excellence with dedication, passion and flexible teaching methods.

Professionally, she has seen her hard work, consistency, high expectations and commitment to treating all kids fairly result in numerous awards and staggering achievements throughout her teaching career. At NCHS, Mrs. Johnson was the Math Olympics Coach for grades 3-6. Out of the 52 students Mrs. Johnson taught, over 20 students were selected as Duke Scholars due to their high test scores in Math and Science. In her three years as a Science Fair Coordinator for the Canton Public School District, 20+ of her students have received the honor of placing as 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> place winners, two students received 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place wins in the Overall State Winner Category and others received special awards from the

US Navy and Jackson State University. Additionally, science fair students have been selected as Broadcom nominees and competed with the top 10% of winners in the United States for a grand prize of \$25,000.

Along with the accomplishments of her students, Mrs. Johnson has achieved professional recognition by her peers and has been awarded Teacher of the Month and Lead 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher. She has served as the Science Club Sponsor from 2010 and the Science Department Chair since 2012. Since 2010, she has been selected as a Middle School Science Representative, Board Member and Conference Presenter of the Mississippi Science Teacher Association. Nissan has also recognized Mrs. Johnson's efforts as a teacher by selecting her as the Nissan Grant Recipient of the Spark Into 21<sup>st</sup> Century Grant.

In the summer of 2013, Mrs. Johnson wrote a Science Club Manual for the Increasing Minorities in Atmospheric Science-RAP (IMAS-RAP) program funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) at Jackson State University for the Jackson Public School District. After submission of the manual to the NSF, Canton Public Schools were added into the grant after Mrs. Johnson's direction of the project contributed to her being recognized by the professors at Jackson State University. The manual is being piloted this year in Jackson and Canton Public School Districts and will be e-published in the summer of 2014. Additionally, CPS was rewarded by the NSF and received innovative equipment through the grant to be used by the Science Club.

Committed to her responsibility as a teacher and her father's wisdom that "you can never know how far you'll go unless you try," Mrs. Johnson regularly seeks to improve her skills and find new ways to impact the educational achievements of her students. Throughout her teaching career, she has participated in the Project Mast-5 summit held at Jackson State University which equips science teachers across the state with research-based knowledge of physical science and the Champs-University of Women workshop which focuses on creating high achievement in mathematics and problem-solving. She has participated in Project TANS (Teacher Academy in the Natural Sciences) from Mississippi State University since 2010-2012 and the Science Fair Coordinators Workshop at Jackson State University since 2009. In 2014, she is looking forward to working as a University of Southern Mississippi GLOBE program teacher as her students will conduct experiments with soil samples and the data collected will be shared internationally.

Mrs. Johnson is committed to the youth and has been inspired to maintain a passionate and innovative attitude towards shaping the lives of children intellectually and spiritually. Besides teaching, Mrs. Johnson shows her commitment to the youth by acting as the Director for the Children/Youth Choir and the Coordinator for the Nursery, Drama and Education Ministry programs at Canton United Methodist Church. Mrs. Johnson credits God, her husband, Deontray Johnson, Sr., and two children, Jordin, and TJ, with providing her love, balance and strength to come up with innovative ways to teach science and positively affect the lives of children in the State of Mississippi.



Superintendent Dwight Luckett congratulates all of the “Teachers of the Year.” Luckett says, “I commend you for empowering students to strive for excellence. You have been selected by your principals and colleagues for going above and beyond to make a difference in the lives of our children. Your commitment and dedication to elevating young minds to reach their full potential is priceless. You never know the countless lives you touch or hearts and minds you inspire. Children deserve a concerned and caring teacher to open him or her up to the world of possibilities awaiting them.

It truly takes all of us working together with one vision, one mission, and one goal to make a difference.

*Keep up the good work!”*





# Goodloe Elementary School “Teacher of the Year”



**Jamie Alicia Cunningham** is a native of Rolling Fork, MS. She is the proud daughter of James and Katherine Tankson. She has two beautiful sisters Dr. Jeanetta Tankson of Athens, GA and Dr. Janice Tankson of Memphis TN. She is a devoted and loving wife to Pastor Therman Cunningham Jr. They are the proud parents of two beautiful daughters Trinity and Taylor Cunningham.

She received a Bachelor of Science in Elementary K-8, with concentrations in computers, social studies, and science from the University for Women, December 2000. She received a Masters Degree in Elementary Education from Jackson State University, December 2005. Her goal is to receive a Specialist Degree in Educational Administration and Supervision.

She has served as a second grade teacher at Goodloe Elementary School in Canton, MS for one year. She has been teaching in the Canton Public School District for eight years. It is her belief that all students can learn given the necessary time and appropriate resources.

Her hobbies are spending time with family and friends, reading, shopping, and traveling to new and fun places. Her motto is: I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13.



# *Nichols Middle School “Teacher of the Year”*

**Lovie Chesser** was born December 19, 1974 to the late Doris Chesser and Larry Chesser of Sharon, Mississippi. She attended Sacred Heart Catholic School from first to third grade. She then attended Velma Jackson High school, where she graduated with honors in 1993. Upon graduation, she attended Mississippi State University where she received degrees in Accounting and Business Management.

At Mississippi State she was an Academic Peer Advisor, treasurer and then president of the Association of Black Business Professionals, and president of her dormitory's student government. She graduated from Mississippi State in June of 1997. She then entered the business world and realized business was not her calling.



She sought to be a substitute teacher and was hired on an emergency license at Velma Jackson High School. She enjoyed the work and strived to become a licensed teacher. Lovie attended Jackson State University and earned a Master's in the Art of Teaching. While earning her degree, Lovie worked for the Jackson Public School system. In 2000, she joined the Canton Public School District family as a math teacher at Nichols Middle School. Lovie remains employed as a math instructor at Nichols Middle School. In 2012, Lovie received her Specialist in Educational Leadership from the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) and is looking forward to pursuing her Doctorate in Educational Leadership.

Lovie married Kelly L. Miller on December 29, 2001. Lovie was blessed with four children at the beginning of this union; Keldrick Docher, Kelneliuz Miller, Shaquayle Miller, and Kelisha Miller. Lovie and Kelly added two new members to their family, Kennedy Mykayla Miller, and Reid Tyreece Miller. They have been a happy family for the past twelve years.

Although she is humbled by the recognition of her peers, Lovie renders her service unto God. She prays daily for God to allow her to make a difference in the lives of the children of the Canton Public School District. She has a genuine love for every student she serves.





# Canton Career Center “Teacher of the Year”



**Rodney Harris** is the proud husband of Tresalyn Harris. Together they have three wonderful sons, Rodney, Gerrodick, and Jayden. The Harris Family resides in Madison County. Both Mr. and Mrs. Harris have strong religious faith and attend Couparle United Methodist Church in Camden, MS. Besides his dedication to his church, he enjoys spending time with his family.

Harris' educational journey began at Velma Jackson High School. Upon graduating from high school, he attended Holmes Community College and received an Associate degree, later he enrolled at Jackson State University and earned a bachelor's in science degree. His passion for education extended far beyond his own personal educational goals. Harris entered the educational system with the Canton Public School District in 2001 teaching Automotive Services. He hoped to engage students in the learning process with his unique style of teaching. Harris sought to explore automotive services from different angles. In his automotive class, it's definitely more than just about automobiles. He incorporates various instructional strategies and activities with reading, writing, mathematics, science, automotive, and problem-solving. From the strong relationships he has maintained with students, parents, and coworkers, Harris saw there was more for him to do in education. He is currently pursuing a Master's of Science in Educational Leadership at Jackson State University. Upon completion of the Educational Leadership program, he plans to pursue a career in school administration. Harris believes that all things are possible through Christ, hard work, and dedication. No time soon does he plan to stop educating the boys and girls of the Canton Public School District. He only plans to assist the district in moving towards achieving more *success*.





# Canton Elementary School "Teacher of the Year"

**Carrice Sims** was born and raised in Gulfport, MS. She is part of a large and caring family which consists of her parents Frank and Carolyn Sims along with five brothers and two sisters. She graduated from Harrison Central High School with high honors in 2000. She devoted much of her time to the marching band throughout middle school and high school which gave her the opportunity to continue her education and experience college on a full band scholarship to Alcorn State University. Sims received her Bachelor's degree from Alcorn State University in Elementary Education where she graduated with cum laude in 2005. She continued her journey of growth by attending Mississippi College and received a Master's degree in Education in 2007. She has recently completed her Specialist's degree in Teacher Leadership at the University of West Alabama on October 11, 2013.



Sims is currently a fifth grade Math teacher at Canton Elementary. She began her teaching career at Canton Elementary in 2005 and it has become her home. This is her ninth year teaching and she has grown professionally since her first year of teaching. Sims enjoys working with students and motivating them to do well in school. She decided to enroll at the University of West Alabama in 2011 to pursue a Specialist's degree in Teacher Leadership because one of her future goals is to become a Curriculum Specialist in Math. She loves designing lesson plans that are innovative, fun, and exciting for her students. Her philosophy of education is that she believes all children can learn. She said, "All children learn differently and as teachers we have to modify our classroom instruction to meet the needs of every child." When students leave her class each day, she wants them to feel confident and know that they can achieve anything in life if they believe in themselves, work hard, and never give up.



# Canton High School “Teacher of the Year”



**Stella Robinson Morris** has been committed to the journey of education for as long as she can remember. She is thankful to her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Robinson, for their support and encouragement. She says without God, none of her dreams or visions would have been possible. Her father's words still remain with her today: "The more you read, the more you will know. The road to success and your future will be boundless. No one can ever take your knowledge, but you can always use your knowledge to help others."

As a child, Morris spent each summer in Cleveland, Ohio with her family. Morris says they weren't allowed to leave the neighborhood; therefore, she utilized her spare time to read to the children that lived in the area. It was a great opportunity to imitate being a teacher. She would offer popsicles to the kids as rewards for listening and being able to answer questions that pertained to the book she had read. This was an excellent opportunity to use a refreshing incentive, to keep her audience engaged. Morris says she didn't realize that her destiny (teaching) had already begun.

Morris' childhood was spent in Holmes, MS. After graduating from Wm-Sullivan High School, she decided to attend Alcorn State University, where she received her Bachelor of Science Degree. Later, she furthered her studies at Mississippi State University and obtained her Masters and Specialist Degrees.

During her career as an educator, Morris has taught 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Math, Money Management, Reading, Nutrition, Computer Discovery, ICT II and STEM. During the initial years of teaching, she says she realized that as an educator she had to make the most of every second she had to work with our youth, both in school and community settings. It makes a world of difference in their lives.

Morris is a member of MECA (Mississippi Educational Computing Association), the Scholarship and Senior Citizen Committees at Macedonia M. B. Church, Co-Chair CHS Leadership Team, Sponsor of CHS National Beta Club, National Honor Society, MS Scholars and a member of the Advisory Committee for STEM. Morris says teaching has always been a most rewarding career. She says as a teacher it gives her an overwhelming satisfaction knowing she shared a few great moments with an Astronaut, Olympic Medalist, a Poet and a teacher in her classroom.

Morris is married to Lawrence Morris of Greenville, MS. They enjoy traveling, reading and spending time with family. They are the proud parents of Edwin, Selena, Alexis and Tre'vin and four special blessing Sunnee, Ethan, Brooke and Bryson.





## Reuben B. Myers CSAS “Teacher of the Year”

**Latoya Washington-Fleming** is one of four children born to Morese and Carlet Johnson of Sharon, MS. She is a life-long resident of the Madison County area and a graduate of Velma Jackson High School. Latoya and her husband, Kashaka, have been married for eight years, and have three children named Xavion, Kyanti, and KaTorri.

Fleming is a proud member of St. Paul A.M.E Zion Church, where she serves as the executive secretary and the director of the children’s ministry. Latoya’s favorite scripture is Philippians 4:13 which states, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

During Fleming’s primary schooling, she was fortunate enough to have many great teachers. Fleming’s classroom inspiration is to be as great as her fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Mildred Gilbreath. Mrs. Gilbreath made a profound impact on her life because of her dedication, patience, and love which caused Fleming to be excited about learning. Those are qualities that she strives to exemplify within her own classroom. Fleming’s children are also her inspiration. She says, “Each day she enters the classroom, she teaches each child as if they were her very own child. She aims to give each student the very best education that they deserve.”

Fleming’s passion for working with children was strengthened while being employed as an Instructional Assistant in the Canton Public School District. The joy she found in working with children prompted her to pursue a degree in elementary education. After obtaining a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Belhaven University, she now holds the position as a 5<sup>th</sup> Grade educator at Reuben B. Myers Canton School of Arts and Sciences.

Fleming’s goal as an educator is to be a life-long learner. She feels that when she continues to learn, she is awarded more knowledge to teach her students. If she was to offer advice to anyone, it would be to never stop learning.

*“Education is the key to success in life and teachers make a lasting impact in the lives of their students.”*  
Solomon Ortiz



# The Difference A Teacher Can Make - True Story

**Steve, a twelve-year-old boy with alcoholic parents, was about to be lost forever, by the U.S. education system.** Remarkably, he could read, yet, in spite of his reading skills, Steve was failing. He had been failing since first grade, as he was passed on from grade to grade. Steve was a big boy, looking more like a teenager than a twelve year old, yet, Steve went unnoticed... until Miss White.

Miss White was a smiling, young, beautiful redhead, and Steve was in love! For the first time in his young life, he couldn't take his eyes off his teacher; yet, still he failed. He never did his homework, and he was always in trouble with Miss White. His heart would break under her sharp words, and when he was punished for failing to turn in his homework, he felt just miserable! Still, he did not study.

In the middle of the first semester of school, the entire seventh grade was tested for basic skills. Steve hurried through his tests, and continued to dream of other things, as the day wore on. His heart was not in school, but in the woods, where he often escaped alone, trying to shut out the sights, sounds and smells of his alcoholic home. No one checked on him to see if he was safe. No one knew he was gone, because no one was sober enough to care. Oddly, Steve never missed a day of school.

One day, Miss White's impatient voice broke into his daydreams.

"Steve!!" Startled, he turned to look at her.

"Pay attention!"

Steve locked his gaze on Miss White with adolescent adoration, as she began to go over the test results for the seventh grade.

"You all did pretty well," she told the class, "except for one boy, and it breaks my heart to tell you this, but..." She hesitated, pinning Steve to his seat with a sharp stare, her eyes searching his face.

"...The smartest boy in the seventh grade is failing my class!"

She just stared at Steve, as the class spun around for a good look. Steve dropped his eyes and carefully examined his fingertips.

After that, it was war!! Steve still wouldn't do his homework. Even as the punishments became more severe, he remained stubborn.

"Just try it! ONE WEEK!" He was unmoved.

"You're smart enough! You'll see a change!" Nothing fazed him.

"Give yourself a chance! Don't give up on your life!" Nothing.

"Steve! Please! I care about you!"

Wow! Suddenly, Steve got it!! Someone cared about him? Someone, totally unattainable and perfect, CARED ABOUT HIM??!!"

Steve went home from school, thoughtful, that afternoon. Walking into the house, he took one look around. Both parents were passed out, in various stages of undress, and the stench was overpowering! He, quickly, gathered up his camping gear, a jar of peanut butter, a loaf of bread, a bottle of water, and this time...his schoolbooks. Grim faced and determined, he headed for the woods.

The following Monday he arrived at school on time, and he waited for Miss White to enter the classroom. She walked in, all sparkle and smiles! God, she was beautiful! He yearned for her smile to turn on him. It did not.

Miss White, immediately, gave a quiz on the weekend homework. Steve hurried through the test, and was the first to hand in his paper. With a look of surprise, Miss White took his paper. Obviously puzzled, she began to look it over. Steve walked back to his desk, his heart pounding within his chest. As he sat down, he couldn't resist another look at the lovely woman.

Miss White's face was in total shock! She glanced up at Steve, then down, then up. Suddenly, her face broke into a radiant smile. The smartest boy in the seventh grade had just passed his first test!

From that moment nothing was the same for Steve. Life at home remained the same, but life still changed. He discovered that not only could he learn, but he was good at it! He discovered that he could understand and retain knowledge, and that he could translate the things he learned into his own life. Steve began to excel! And he continued this course throughout his school life.

After high-school Steve enlisted in the Navy, and he had a successful military career. During that time, he met the love of his life, he raised a family, and he graduated from college Magna Cum Laude. During his Naval career, he inspired many young people, who without him, might not have believed in themselves. Steve began a second career after the Navy, and he continues to inspire others, as an adjunct professor in a nearby college

Miss White left a great legacy. She saved one boy who has changed many lives. I know, because I am the love of his life.

You see, it's simple, really. A change took place within the heart of one boy, all because of one teacher, who cared.

Written by Jaye Lewis







- Learning is not attained by chance, it must be sought for with ardor and attended to with diligence.

Abigail Adams - 1780

- Every individual matters. Every individual has a role to play. Every individual makes a difference. Jane Goodall
- A teacher has to be a prophet who can look into the future and see the world of tomorrow into which the children of today must fit.

Anonymous

- It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge. Albert Einstein
- We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give. Winston Churchill
- If you think you can do a thing, or think you can't do a thing; you're right. Henry Ford
- What is the greatest sign of success for a teacher...?  
It is to be able to say, "The children are now working as if I did not exist". Maria Montessori
- Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant. Robert Louis Stevenson
- The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said. Peter F. Drucker
- It is not enough to have a good mind, the main thing is to use it well. Rene Descartes
- Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever. Mahatma Gandhi
- Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. Albert Einstein

# The Best Teacher Ever

**There is a story from many years ago of a primary school teacher. Her name was Mrs.**

**Thompson.** And as she stood in front of her 5th grade class on the very first day of school, she told the children a lie. Like most teachers, she looked at her students and said that she loved them all the same.

But that was impossible because there in the front row, slumped in his seat, was a little boy named Teddy Stoddard.

Mrs. Thompson had watched Teddy the year before and noticed that he didn't play well with the other children, that his clothes were messy and that he constantly needed a bath. And, Teddy could be unpleasant.

It got to the point where Mrs. Thompson would actually take delight in marking his papers with a broad red pen, making bold X's and then putting a big "F" at the top of his papers. At the school where Mrs. Thompson taught, she was required to review each child's past records and she put Teddy's off until last.

However, when she reviewed his file, she was in for a surprise, Teddy's first grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is a bright child with a ready laugh. He does his work neatly and has good manners...he is a joy to be around."

His second grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is an excellent student, well liked by his classmates, but he is troubled because his mother has a terminal illness and life at home must be a struggle."

His third grade teacher wrote, "His mother's death has been hard on him. He tries to do his best but his father doesn't show much interest and his home life will soon affect him if some steps aren't taken."

Teddy's fourth grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is withdrawn and doesn't show much interest in school. He doesn't have many friends and sometimes sleeps in class."

By now, Mrs. Thompson realized the problem and she was ashamed of herself. She felt even worse when her students brought her Christmas presents, wrapped in beautiful paper and tied with pretty ribbons, except for Teddy's. His present which was clumsily wrapped in the heavy, brown paper that he got from a grocery bag.

Mrs. Thompson took pains to open it in the middle of the other presents. Some of the children started to laugh when she found a rhinestone bracelet with some of the stones missing, and a bottle that was one quarter full of perfume. But she stifled the children's laughter when she exclaimed how pretty the bracelet was, putting it on, and dabbing some of the perfume on her wrist. Teddy Stoddard stayed after school that day just long enough to say, "Mrs. Thompson, today you smelled just like my mom used to."

After the children left she cried for at least an hour. On that very day, she quit teaching reading, and writing, and arithmetic. Instead she began to teach children.

Mrs. Thompson paid particular attention to Teddy. As she worked with him, his mind seemed to come alive. The more she encouraged him, the faster he responded. By the end of the year, Teddy had become one of the smartest children in the class and, despite her lie that she would love all the children the same, Teddy became one of her "teacher's pets."

A year later, she found a note under her door, from Teddy, telling her that she was still the best teacher he ever had in his whole life.

Six years went by before she got another note from Teddy. He then wrote that he had finished high school, third in his class, and she was still the best teacher he ever had in his whole life.

Four years after that, she got another letter, saying that while things had been tough at times, he'd stayed in school, had stuck with it, and would soon graduate from college with the highest of honors. He assured Mrs. Thompson that she was still the best and favorite teacher he ever had in his whole life.

Then four more years passed and yet another letter came. This time he explained that after he got his bachelor's degree, he decided to go a little further. The letter explained that she was still the best and favorite teacher he ever had. But now his name was a little longer - the letter was signed, Theodore F. Stoddard, MD.

The story doesn't end there. You see, there was yet another letter that spring. Teddy said he'd met this girl and was going to be married. He explained that his father had died a couple of years ago and he was wondering if Mrs. Thompson might agree to sit in the place at the wedding that was usually reserved for the mother of the groom. Of course Mrs. Thompson did.

And guess what? She wore that bracelet, the one with several rhinestones missing. And she made sure she was wearing the perfume that Teddy remembered his mother wearing on their last Christmas together. They hugged each other, and Dr.

Stoddard whispered in Mrs. Thompson's ear, "Thank you Mrs. Thompson for believing in me. Thank you so much for making me feel important and showing me that I could make a difference."

Mrs. Thompson, with tears in her eyes, whispered back. She said, "Teddy, you have it all wrong. You were the one who taught me that I could make a difference. I didn't know how to teach until I met you."

Author Unknown



# My Teacher's Simple Three-Word Phrase

**My life was dramatically transformed because a simple three-word phrase was delivered at the right time in just the right way.** When I was three years old, my parents discovered I was totally deaf, a situation which forced them to make crucial decisions about my education.

After consulting with numerous specialists and doctors, they made a decision that would forever alter my future. Instead of sending me to a private school for the deaf, they decided to "mainstream" me. All of my peers and teachers would have normal hearing.

Since I started going there in 3rd grade, I was the only deaf child at Blue Creek Elementary School in the small, quiet town of Latham, New York. From almost the first day there, the other kids taunted me and called me names mainly because of my hearing aid and the way I talked.

I remember thinking, "What have I done wrong?"

My hearing aid was a rectangular box that was harnessed to my shoulders and hung from my neck like an albatross. It created a big lump on my chest with wires running from the box to my ears.

I experienced great anxiety throughout elementary school because, in addition to the problems of "fitting in" with the other students, I also struggled mightily with most of my schoolwork. I seemed to spend every spare moment doing homework just so I could keep up. The teachers didn't know what to do with me.

Because of my hearing disability, I was constantly asking everyone, "What did he/she say?" But I worried that everyone would soon grow tired of repeating everything back to me. Since fitting in was so important to me, every time people around me laughed or smiled, I did the same even though I usually had no idea what was going on.

When the kids made fun of me, I internalized all of it. I was sure that I was a bad person; I felt I deserved their sneers.

On the surface, I was gregarious, outgoing and happy-go-lucky, but in reality, my self-esteem was quite low. I saw myself as an ugly buck-toothed kid wearing a weird-looking box around his neck who wasn't smart enough to keep up with the rest of the kids.

Mrs. Jordan, my 5th grade teacher, changed all of that with a simple three-word phrase. A large woman with salt and pepper hair, and twinkling brown eyes, Mrs. Jordan had a voice that boomeranged off the walls of her tiny classroom. One morning, she asked the class a question. I read her lips from my front-row seat and immediately raised my hand. I couldn't believe it -- for once I knew the answer. But, when she called on me, I was afraid. Here was an opportunity to impress the powerful teacher and show her I was worthy of her love. Maybe even impress my classmates a little. I didn't want to blow it.

Despite my fears, I felt uncharacteristically confident because -- for once -- I was sure I had the right answer. I took a deep breath and nervously answered Mrs. Jordan's question.

I will never forget what happened next.

Her response was explosive. It startled all of us.

Mrs. Jordan enthusiastically slammed her right foot on the floor and whirled her right finger in a full circle until it pointed directly at me.

With sparkling eyes and a wide smile she cried, "THAT'S RIGHT STEPHEN!"

For the first time in my young life, I was an instant star.

My heart burst with pride as an ear-to-ear grin filled my face. I sat a little taller in my chair and puffed out my chest. My confidence soared like never before. I decided right then and there that I would make a place for myself in this world. A simple three-word phrase delivered with incredible enthusiasm had totally transformed my young life.

"That's right Stephen!"

From that day forward, my grades and speech improved dramatically. My popularity among my peers increased and my outlook on life did a complete turnabout.

And it all started with Mrs. Jordan. "THAT'S RIGHT STEPHEN!"

By Stephen J. Hopson

Stephen Hopson is a former award-winning stockbroker turned inspirational speaker and author



Phone: 601-859-3984  
 Email: [beverlylucett@cantonschools.net](mailto:beverlylucett@cantonschools.net)  
 Beverly Luckett, Editor  
 Communications Specialist

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## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Canton Public School District, with full participation of parents and the total community, is to enable all students to become analytical thinkers, self-directed lifelong learners and effective communicators who are prepared to continue their education and /or to enter the global workplace and to participate in society as responsible citizens.

## OUR VISION

Children are our greatest asset and value. It is the responsibility of the parents, school and the community to serve as a perpetual bridge for the development of our children's character and the enhancement of their ability to master data, interpret knowledge, and apply the practical principles of their mastery.

## BELIEF STATEMENTS

- **All children can learn, but at different rates and in different ways.**  
 Students must be actively involved in the learning process.
- **Education is a community effort.**  
*It is the responsibility of the parents, the community and the schools to be active participants in nurturing and educating our youth.*
- **Family is a powerful influence on both children and the community.**  
*Parents must be informed about and involved in the education of their children.*
- **Self-respect and self worth are essential to success.**  
*The schools are the vehicles for students to develop the positive attitudes and goals that lead to a sense of motivation and self worth.*
- **High expectations for our children will produce higher achievement.**  
*The schools provide the environment to model and reinforce higher goals for students.*
- **Working together it is possible to change negative perceptions and environmental factors that affect student learning.**  
*Civic organizations, businesses, churches, news media, and the schools must become active partners in change.*

**The Canton Public School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, or disability in hiring or in participation in educational programs or activities.**