

Newington Public School

I never used to consider myself capable of being a leader. In elementary school, I was fairly smart, but shy and didn't normally take charge. One day, my 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Ms. Lodge, convinced me otherwise. We were doing a Civil War Encampment, a social studies simulation. Ms. Lodge was announcing whom she had picked as the general of the north, Ulysses S. Grant, and the general of the south, Robert E Lee. I never expected one of these roles; I didn't see myself having the ability to lead a group of my classmates. Then she told us. I was to be General Grant, and my best friend would be General Lee.

I was shocked at my teacher's choices. Being one of the generals, required being able to lead your side through several weeks of a historical simulation. My whole class had been anticipating the start of this unit for weeks, and we all had our guesses as to who the generals would be. I never expected to be a general, and I never expected my best friend to be my new "enemy". Yet, I found myself in the role of directing troop movements and anticipating the "surrender" of the southern army, by my closest friend! I know Ms. Lodge was looking for class leaders to be these two important, but opposing generals; from my point of view, her choosing me was the most unlikely pick.

A leader is traditionally defined as someone who inspires or guides others. When I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, I never would have said that I exhibited these qualities. Today, I'm still not always sure that I possess these characteristics. However, more often than not, I can understand my teacher's perspective. Since 6<sup>th</sup> grade, I have grown. Now, I can see myself as a leader and recognize what I do to influence others. I do well in school and I

often receive the comment, “is a help to other students,” on grade reports. This is when I realize that I am capable of being a leader and a positive influence. I have always been shy, but I am starting to outgrow that. I now see myself with qualities that I have admired in others, including those of a leader. I think I owe this in part to Ms. Lodge. Often, when I don’t feel like I’m able to do something, I remember what she helped me discover about myself. Ms. Lodge proved to me that I was capable of leading and trusting my judgment in situations that affect others. Without this experience, I feel like I would be a different person.

I know that I owe a lot of my qualities to my time as a student at the Newington Public School and to the teachers there. Newington is a very small town, and the learning experience I had in elementary school was unlike what many others have. At Newington, you know all the teachers and all of the students. It’s impossible to go unnoticed, the environment is amazing, and everyone is encouraged to reach their potential. The school is so small that classes have multiple grades. There is an incredible sense of community, and most of my peers have not had the same benefit or a similar experience. Without a doubt, Newington School has shaped much of the way I am today, as a student, but more importantly, as a person. I know that it is how I first recognized my ability to be a leader. I owe a lot to Newington Public School. Without it, I don’t know who I would be.