*Share a story about your favorite educator*

**Thank you Dr. Hayes**

**By: Brian Flanigan-Arthurs**

My favorite educator was my 10th grade Geometry teacher, Dr. Hayes. Now, as sophomore, math was probably my least favorite subject, but this teacher was different from many others I had to that point. The first thing was his strong Boston accent (which will play a big role later in this story), and then appreciating how he generally taught from the back of the classroom, opting to call students up and directed them to work out problems on the board for the whole class to follow.

One thing that I remember most in his class was his number one rule – he called it the “Golden Dart” which had a prop of a dart wrapped in a gold foil. As he often expressed in class, the Golden Dart rule included the fact that we all make mistakes, and we learn from those mistakes. That’s what makes us better than when we started. He held, that when he makes a mistake, or a student volunteers an incorrect answer, or errors while following his direction on the board, we don’t “throw darts” at them, and make them feel cheap.

One day, I was selected to jump up to the front of the class, and work out a problem he dictated. I was excited to do this. While I didn’t volunteer (he never chose volunteers); everyone who worked out problems on the board, always left at the end of the period happy because he would help, step by step, of how to do the problem. There was no need to fear being in front of the class.

He started by telling me to “draw a dart.” I thought that was a bit odd, since this was Geometry class, not art. Now, I’m a horrible artist, and I knew my dart would look nothing like a real dart. But, I did my best. I drew a decently straight line, added some angled lines at one end, and a series of shorter, angled lines on the other end of the line.

Dr. Hayes started chuckling. He said, “Brian, I asked you to draw a dart.” I apologized for my poor artistic skills, and proclaimed that I was really doing my best. He laughed a little harder, and said, “I said, dart, not a dart.” Others in the class were beginning to laugh as well.

I was even more confused. I erased my work, and started over. This time, using a ruler, to make sure my lines were straight. I even grabbed a different color, and a protractor to draw my 45-degree lines. Dr. Hayes, was now laughing so hard, I saw tears from his eyes. He said, “Brian, let me show you how to draw a dart.” At that point, he gestured for me to hand over my marker. Handing it over, he went to the white board, and proceeded to draw a dot. Nothing fancy. Just a dot.

Dr. Hayes, then said, “Brian, see, that’s a dot. You drew a dart.” Of course all of this was in his Boston accent, and I then got it.

Dr. Hayes class turned out to be one of my favorites – he always had stories that connected complex math concepts to everyday life. And he would tell the stories, which seemed like, as a class, we were getting him off task. But he was in control the whole time. He purposely got the class so intrigued by what he was saying, that we were all more than hundred percent focused. The math concept was interweaved as part of the story, but we didn’t know. He knew, and by the end of the story, along with asking us questions throughout his story “to make sure we were paying attention,” we all understood the math, too.

I always thought he was paranoid that his students would cheat on tests. He was an upstanding man, who always drilled into us the value of being our best selves, and encouraged us to not get ourselves into bad moral situations. When he passed out tests, there were always a version A and a version B. He claimed that this would encourage us to not cheat off our neighbor, and helped us out with two versions, so that we wouldn’t be in situation that gave an opportunity to do something immoral, such as cheating.

My junior year, I had the opportunity in my schedule to be a Teacher’s Aide. I right away applied to be Dr. Hayes’ aide, and was accepted. Having so much respect for his process, I was a great aide, always doing as asked, marking attendance, hitting the lights, etc. He soon trusted me to grade his tests. I had a stack of papers to grade, and he provided me an answer key – but just one, not a version A, or a version B, just one answer key.

Without other students in earshot, I asked him, which key this was for, version A, or version B? He laughed, and said quietly, “Look at the two tests.” Looking at the two versions of the tests, I noticed that while both had an “A” or “B” on the top, the contents were otherwise identical. Work smarter, not harder.

Working as an aide was probably one of the easiest credit I’ve ever earned. As such, there would be times that I would just be able to observe. Dr. Hayes continued his practices that I experienced as his Geometry student the year before. Telling intriguing stories of his youth, always tied into what the students were learning, much to their surprise, and bringing students up to the board, and reminding them not to throw “Darts” at one another.

As it was when I was his Geometry student, Dr. Hayes would always choose students to go to the white board to follow his directions, working out a math problem for the whole class. As I also had access to grading tests, I knew which students were performing better than others, academically. It didn’t take long to notice that the students who were chosen were ones that didn’t do as well on the tests. Privately, I asked him about this.

He said, “I know. That’s on purpose. Those kids need some wins. They aren’t getting wins in many other places, and they could use one.”

I knew after his class, both as a student, and his aide, that I wanted to go into teaching. I’ve always made it my goal, too, to follow the rule of the Golden Dart. We don’t make others feel cheap. We don’t let ourselves get into bad situations. We help those who need it. We work smarter, not harder. We do this together.

Thank you Dr. Hayes.