

# THE STORY OF AN INSPIRING TEACHER

Mr Culpan, my Grade Four teacher, slowly scanned the classroom with his eyes and called up the spelling bee finalists one by one like a seasoned game show host. Only five students were going to make it to this round and my heart was pounding so hard in anticipation that I almost missed hearing my name! My teacher always played spelling games with us and bought the winner an icy pole from the canteen every Friday.

Despite arriving in Australia as a refugee only two years earlier, living in a cramped two bedroom apartment with my four other siblings, and helping with domestic duties from a young age as both my parents worked odd shift hours, I loved going to school. Even if I was feeling ill on the day, there was no way anyone could keep me at home. Our teacher always made us feel special and the classroom a place where we belonged.

It wasn't just about the kind words and his ever present smile, but it was also in the way he modelled dedication and gratitude. We were a class of 28 students with the majority of us from a poor migrant background with broken English. The only posters on the walls were the ones our teacher created himself using cheap butcher's paper, but we loved his silly drawings and funny comments that made learning fun and memorable. We all loved our teacher very much, even the children who sometimes had to stay back at lunch time to see him for their poor behavioural choices. In his class we could dream to be the next astronaut in space and he told us that the only thing holding us back was how much hard work we were ready to put in our education. We were taught how to believe in ourselves and our teacher was always there to help us whenever we got stuck.

In fact, when I look back now to all those years ago when I was in Grade Four, I reflect on the type of person I am now, and I thank Mr Culpan for the profound impact he had in my life. Unfortunately I never kept in touch with my amazing Grade Four teacher but wish that I had! However, we are now looking for his type to inspire and engage the next generation of learners in our College.

Are you ready to be a 'Mr Culpan' for your students? If the answer is yes, then we would love to hear from you.

By Ms Rahat Arain  
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