

# Mission impossible

Business



Wednesday on January 23, 2013 at 0600 in Phoenix, Arizona I had no idea what to expect and because of that, I was a little nervous. A classroom full of 5th graders isn't a place you can just walk into confidently. It had been over 8 years since I last stepped into an elementary school and to say the least, I had forgotten the protocol. I opened the door and awkwardly stood in the doorway looking for some sense of direction.

None could be found. So I took a seat. I was here for one purpose: to help Miss Morgan with her refugee students. I thought it would be an easy mission, but I was undoubtedly wrong in so many ways. What I encountered was something vastly different than what I had imagined. Kids were writhing in their seats and sliding to the floor, hitting one another on the head, and disrespecting their teacher as well as their classmates.

“ What did I get myself into?” I asked myself. All I wanted was to help our community, to be an upstanding citizen, to play my part in making our society better—goals that have been heavily drilled into my mind by that very same society. But how was I supposed to do that here? Honestly, I felt my presence was pointless; this whole thing was just a lost cause. How much could one person really do for these kids? However, as the minutes ticked by, I began to understand what was truly going on and before my eyes, my purpose became clearer. This would be my first lesson in why our public schools desperately need education reform. At 10: 00, they opened their performance portfolios.

Inside these dingy blue paper folders held their AIMS scores from last year. As I walked around helping the kids understand their scores and setting

goals for what their scores would look like this year, I realized how fortunate I was in my schooling. These kids, who have all the potential in the world, were scoring at levels that would never allow them to graduate from high school—more than half were at a level of “ falls far below” or “ approaches”. After hearing all their ideas on how they would achieve their goals for success, I made one for myself: to help them achieve their goal by the end of this semester. “ But I’m stupid.” Three simple words, never had I heard them used in an educational setting.

It was completely unsettling. They came from a petite girl with shaggy overgrown bangs. Even if all my efforts to help Miss Morgan only result in changing this little girl’s mind, I didn’t care. Because in that moment, I knew I wasn’t going to wait for someone else to change her mind. I was going to do it myself because education reform needs to start somewhere.

These little kids deserve more than just a curriculum thrown together by the State that judges how well they do based on a yearly test. They need someone to care about their education, not whether their test scores bring in more funding for the school. When teachers teach to a test, these are the results you get: frustrated students who do not value education and teachers who hate their job. When did education become such a business?