

A lasting impact

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The teachers kids deserve

By Brenttia Clayton Special to the Democrat-Gazette

Growing up in Osceola, I found my love for education. My teachers contributed to many of my educational experiences and led me to many opportunities, one being a scholarship to attend the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. There are many memories that I have from Osceola.

At North Elementary, I will always remember the day my music teacher Mrs. Zenanko taught us the song “Knowledge is Power” for our kindergarten graduation. I did not understand the significance of those words at the time, but as I grew up I came to the realization of what this meant. Why I teach

To me, “Knowledge is Power” is another way of saying “Education is *key!*” Once you have it, it is something that no one can take from you; it is yours and it is the one thing that you have control over. Once you learn something, it is up to you what you do with it. I believe it is important to either self-educate or learn from educators.

At Osceola High School, I had three teachers who continued to help me foster the “Knowledge is Power” motto. The first teacher was Ms. Jennifer Lewis, who helped me grow personally and professionally. She helped me realize how important relationships were, and she allowed me to become more aware of the legacy that I want to leave. She used to ask us, “What do you want people to remember you by?” Today, she still impacts my life by supporting me through my own journey of becoming a teacher.

The second teacher was Mr. Carr, who showed me that there is always a way to reach your goals. He once said, “Even when it may seem like there isn’t a way, don’t give up.” I remember when the scheduled date of my interview for the Chancellor’s Leadership Corps Scholarship conflicted with my mom’s work schedule and, because the interview was in Little Rock at the university, I had no idea how I would attend. I told Mr. Carr, and without hesitation he requested a van and drove me and two of my classmates to Little Rock for the scholarship interview. I will always be grateful and respect him for that.

The third teacher was Mrs. Kane. Mrs. Kane was one of the most challenging teachers I think I have ever had, but it was all out of love. We knew once we stepped foot into her class there was no playing and we were expected to learn and work hard. She had very high expectations, but she was always consistent and fair. I never understood why she put so much effort into her

math classes before, but once I became a college student I immediately reflected back to her teachings and strategies that she taught us.

Every teacher I've ever had has had an impact on my life in some way, but I honestly don't know what my childhood would have been like if I had not have had Ms. Lewis, Mr. Carr, or Mrs. Kane as my teachers. They helped me see that there is so much more to teaching than just standing in front of a classroom and talking to students.

I left Osceola to attend the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, where I became more involved in various educational activities. Engaging in these things, I grew as a student-teacher. I began volunteering at different schools in Little Rock and interning with various organizations. One of these internships, Arkansas Teacher Corps (ATC), helped my passion for teaching grow. ATC's motto is "*Commit, Serve, Teach!*" This organization trains future educators who have the passion, drive, and love for children, believing that all students should have equal opportunities inside and outside the classroom, regardless of socioeconomic backgrounds, gender, race, *etc.*

Last summer I spent seven weeks in El Dorado learning from highly trained professionals. Throughout the institute, I saw the drive and love that the organization has for the children in our state, especially for students who are not receiving the education they deserve. Through this internship, I became conscious about things I had never noticed, and I was amazed to see people being trained for such a short, intense time grow to be strong, effective teachers. By working with the students in El Dorado, ATC developed teachers who care deeply about students' individual needs and growth. There are no words to explain how excited I am to hear that the same opportunities that were provided to the students in El Dorado last summer will be made available to the students in my hometown.

ATC trains teachers to go above and beyond like Mr. Carr, to consistently support students throughout life like Ms. Lewis, and to hold nothing but the highest expectations like Mrs. Kane. this is an exceptional opportunity for children in Osceola, the Osceola School District, and the Arkansas Teacher Corps.

*Brenttia Clayton is a 2012 graduate of Osceola High School and served as the summer intern for the 2016 ATC Summer Institute. She is graduating from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock this month with a degree in elementary education.
(arkansasteacher corps.org)*

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BRENTTIA CLAYTON
SPECIAL TO THE DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

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Guest writer

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