

kiley reid

PARENT NIGHT AT CONFIDENCE ACADEMY

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN IN ALISTAIR'S FAMILY:

We mean to inform you of your son's progress at Confidence Academy: he has failed to the point of no fixing. In our star system he earned no stars. In the tally board, we created 'negative tallies.' We created these 'negative tallies' for him.

Do not feel poorly, boys are able to do this in some years. It hurts us too, a little. You must remember something for his life and yours; sometimes you aren't good enough and that is an alright thing because you get to try again unless it's your second try (See Section 43.2: Confidence Academy won't support failures after year two due to funding).

I've always liked your son. He is someone other children enjoy sitting by and swinging with, and this is a talent. There are other letters I must write today about smart children who no one likes, and those are much more difficult. I hope you take heart in that knowledge. If we were in my hometown in Germany, my mother would say that life is no pony farm, and she would say this in German.

Best,
Teacher

To Whom It May Concern in Sabrina's family:

Sabrina will attend a college that people will know of when they hear its name. She has earned 53 stars and she tallied 143 points. She says *please* and *thank you* in a way that you can tell is natural.

While I am happy to continue having Sabrina as the Fire Drill Master, the nature of her diligence has caused me some anxiety. She keeps the attendance sheet crisp and she breathes as instructed as she counts the children (See Section 2.3: Pupils breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth), but Sabrina's discipline has an intensity that I can see manifesting in places that I wouldn't deem appropriate. She is the kind of person who will later ask a boyfriend to be a little bit rough, but then she'll cry afterwards and keep saying that she's fine. She'll sit in her apartment and not realize that she has been picking at the black head behind her knee for over an hour. She'll look up and wonder when the sun went down.

None of these qualities will keep her from doing all of the things that people do, but if you would like me to appoint another Fire Drill Master, please signal me privately in the pick-up line. I can also see Sabrina becoming so angry that this task was taken away from her that she would start to pluck at the hairs near the back of her scalp. Again, this wouldn't make her unsuccessful, but we can make the transition a tender one.

Best,
Teacher

To Whom It May Concern in Alabama's family:

Alabama has succeeded to the point of leveling upward. She has earned 7 stars, and tallied the same number of points plus 6. This is not a large amount, but I feel that in terms of her life, points will not be regarded as chiefly for your child.

Alabama asks questions that turn the recipient deep inside themselves. She will put her face close to yours and say, "Why did your mommy give you that name." She'll hug your side and ask, "But who puts *you* to bed at night?" She is the type of person who will later open a window when her sister has died, so her sister's soul can float into the night and away from all her fears. She is good at spelling words that contain silent letters, and she reads all the directions before she begins.

Alabama never cries and she finds Jonah's threats 'silly.' I want to do this also.

Best,
Teacher

To Whom It May Concern in Sasha's family:

Sasha has outdone all the other students. He earned 156 stars and tallied so many points that they didn't fit on the chart anymore. I had to go down the sides and into the margins to draw his tallies — they started to look more like hyphens — and we all together learned that sometimes doing better than everyone else doesn't look the way you thought it would.

I think it's important that you know Sasha's reaction to earning tally number eighty-seven. Jonah got a little mean and said, "That's *big* points, Sasha. Wow-*wee*." Sasha said nothing but Jonah continued to sing, "*Lama lama ding dong*," and, "*Ah suki suki now*," in Sasha's general direction. As the firemen removed Jonah from class, I heard Sasha say, "Tallies can't be big because they aren't even here." He earned zero points for eye contact that period.

I want to say all these things like, "We're doing the best that we can!" and, "This isn't easy for everyone!" But you know this more than I do because you managed to have a child, despite the amounts of normal-person sadness. And so, I won't say anything.

Best,
Teacher

To Whom It May Concern in Caleb's family:

Caleb is fine now. It's something like 46 stars and a bigger amount of tallies.

I still feel badly about Caleb's fight with Raymond earlier this year. They both cried and it was not a fun thing. We (myself and two other Teachers) collectively talked about it for too long after it happened, which made it all stupidly worse.

When I was little, my oldest brother fell and hit his mouth on the side of our bunk bed. His front tooth became stuck in the wood (See YouTube Video: *Boy's Front Tooth Becomes Stuck In Wood*). He panicked and I laughed a little. He ripped himself free and landed on his feet, but the tooth stayed put in the side of our bed. It was six months before it started to rot and my mother asked a neighbor to pull it out with pliers. This gives me the same feelings as the aftermath of your son's fight. I've never done 'serious' neatly, and it never crossed my unserious mind that Raymond would use a stapler for anything other than book reports.

I do think Caleb is fine now. As they say in my country, everything has an end, but the sausage, it has two.

Best,
Teacher

To Whom It May Concern in Bekka's family:

Bekka is a nice person to sit in the front row. She has earned 43.5 stars and tallied 105.5 points. Bekka receives many half points that I tell myself will even out. It's because her face makes me guilty when she cries, and I have eight other pupils to give confidence to. She is the only one in class to receive point-fives, which does make her a little special. If Jonah's parents ask about point-fives, please tell them that they do not happen or exist.

This year, at Carnival Day, I stopped worrying about Bekka in a very good way. She skipped and sang with the other children — she was the dirtiest one by 1000% — as the annual Cake Walk commenced. You know this, because you have to, but Bekka won two cakes that day. I have not seen this happen ever. The way her smile was shaped on that second cake win stays with me even now. All the pieces of her very complete human self revealed themselves as she jumped inside the light. Bekka is filthy, but she shows all the signs of knowing who she is (See *How To Come Back To Yourself As A Young Thing*: Chapter 4). I think it is okay if you stop worrying about her, too.

I also support her decision to move from two C's to two K's, and I encourage her classmates to support her as well.

Best,
Teacher

To Whom It May Concern in Raymond's family:

Hello, Susan. Please don't tell the other parents that I miss Raymond because that could very well be the end. I hope he is as great as is allowed at those types of places, and that he received the sweatbands I sent. It was nothing, so don't think of making a thank you card or any type of customary gesture that a parental figure in your life once said that you should make.

There's a movie called *A Christmas Story* where a bully mistreats a little boy every day. The little boy finally has enough of it and beats this mean kid up. His mom runs over and pulls him off. I asked my mother what she would do if she saw me beating up a mean person, someone who had made my life and preferences difficult to find. She said, "I'd walk over, and I'd make you stop, but I'd walk over *very* slowly."

I'm not saying that you walked over slowly (I remember you at the very least trotting) but if you were in fact a good runner who chose not to run, I'd understand. While Raymond and Caleb bled and cried, Jonah giggled into his hands. I feel he is the real enemy here. Also: 10 stars and 16 tallies if that is important for you to know.

Best,
Teacher

To Whom It May Concern in Genevieve's family:

Genevieve should be given the thing she wants mostly. Fifty combined stars and tallies is actually very good for someone with her nervous hands.

I'm sure you have heard this before, but Genevieve is in fact the only student in our class without a middle name. It sets her apart when we practice meeting others (See *When You're Over The Bar Scene*: Chapters 5 and 6) and it makes her alone when we study Monograms / Italics / History of the South.

If you are worried that all the good ones have been taken, you are mistaken in a great way. You can still find unique names that may not be attractive to look at, but will add to her character and her list of Interesting Things. She'll tell a lover that she didn't have a middle name till she was (this) age. They'll touch her face, say, "Really?" and pretend that her hair was about to fall in her eye (it was not and it never is).

If you're nervous about this transition, contact Bekka's family for support. Bekka's mother is the type of person who likes it when people 'stop by.'

Best,
Teacher

To Whom It May Concern in Jonah's family:

And here we are at the end of the (school) year. Sometimes, when I think of this, I do a little disco with the top of my thighs, and I whisper-sing in a sweet falsetto, *No-mah Jo-nah*. I am uncertain of Jonah's points and tallies for the year, but I do know that he lit sixteen things on fire.

Your son will be promoted to the next class (Cheers for all!) and I'd like to inform you of what this means for my life. Jonah's decision to stand outside my classroom window and watch me eat lunch every day was a very special thing for him to do. If you were a woman of 38, wouldn't you love a little boy with a dead front tooth to stare at you while you eat your Lean Cuisine? What über fun for all! Sometimes he would strike a match (we've never known how or where he got them) and let it burn down to the tips of his fingers.

The only nice thing your son brought to Confidence Academy was the necessary presence of firemen. I am courting one and I feel that we are starting to do that thing where we both feel that it's strange if we don't talk every day. I am looking forward to standing in the shower (sometimes with this aforementioned fireman) and not crying as if I am in a video of music.

As they say in this country "They all lived happily ever after!" or as they say in mine, "And if they are not dead, they are still alive."

Bye forever,

Teacher 🍌