Katie Tauber

I Believe in Failing Fourth Grade

I skipped fourth grade and took fifth grade twice because I failed fifth grade the first time around. It might sound crazy, but it actually happened. It was difficult for me to be placed into a class with students who, at the time, seemed much older than me. Even if they were only a year older, they seemed big and intimidating. I was a shy and quiet individual, so it was hard for me to make friends with them. I was not socially or academically ready for fifth grade and I should have taken fourth grade like everyone else. I didn't feel like I fit in or belonged in that class. I did not know anyone and all of my other friends were happily taking fourth grade without me. My elementary school was focusing on challenging students to go above and beyond so that the school's statistics and pass rates would look better. Apparently I was an ideal candidate for that position. My grades were horrible all throughout that miserable year and I remember the frustration I felt because I couldn't make a passing grade. The bad grades that I received in school really had an effect on my confidence for years to come. I remember feeling humiliated when I found out I had to take my most miserable year again. Other students probably thought that I was stupid or dumb. Now, none of that matters.

All that matters now is what I learned from this experience. Now that I look back on it ten years later, I'm grateful that I was held back. I believe that failing fifth grade made me stronger in the end and I learned lifelong lessons. I didn't let a bad situation get the best of me and the second try at fifth grade was a hundred times better than the first. I learned more and understood what I should have the first time around. Everything ended up better than before and I learned the importance of taking a moment to slow down and enjoy where I am in life. Everything happens for a reason and I want to focus on what is happening now in the present. It seems that sometimes, for me, that everyone is always trying to out-do each other. It is always about comparing yourself to others. I do not want my life to be a race or a competition. I saw from my horrific fifth grade year that some things are not meant to be rushed. Things like elementary school are meant to be enjoyed and later looked back upon as years filled with joy. It is important for me to take the time to enjoy where I am in life and reflect on what I have to be thankful for. Some things cannot be rushed and I now focus on finding joy in every aspect of life. Life is short and I have made it my goal to enjoy every bit of it.  ​