Katie Tauber

I Believe in Failing Fourth Grade

As an 8 year old in the third grade, I received my state assessments back and the county decided that I would skip fourth grade. My elementary school challenged and pushed 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 due to my high test scores. From the first day of fifth grade, I knew I did not belong in that class.

I did not fit in socially or academically during fifth grade. The other students seemed much older than myself and I did not know any of them- and they did not know me. As a naturally shy person, I was devastated to be away from my friends in the fourth grade class. I became very reserved and isolated myself. I scored horribly 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 had an effect on my confidence for years to come. I remember worrying about if my peers thought I was stupid.

I felt humiliated when I found out I had to take fifth grade again. I skipped a grade. I failed a grade. I wasted a year. At least I had it with my friends the second time around. And I already knew what we had to learn. Things started to look up. 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 and wiser person. I did not let a bad situation get the best of me and the second try at fifth grade turned out a hundred times better than the first. I not only understood the school material, but I learned more about myself.

What matters now is not the humiliation, or the stress, or the tears. It’s the entire experience where I learned the importance of taking a moment to slow down and enjoy where my life has taken me. Everything happens for a reason and I want to focus on my life now- in the present. It seems that sometimes, for me, everyone tries to out-do each other. I do not want to compare myself to others. I do not want my life to turn out as a race or a competition. I do not want a repetition of my horrific fifth grade year. Life should not be forcefully rushed through without any second thoughts.

I find it very important to take the time to enjoy where life has brought me. I now focus on finding joy and small things to be thankful for in every aspect of life. Anyone should look back on their youth and remember the small things, such as elementary school, as joyous times. My journey on earth continues to fly by daily and I am appreciating every bit of it.