



ERIN
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of Cape Coral has a Ph.D. in education and is the mother of three children.

The Furlong Year

Good **teachers** impart more than academics

Each year, my husband and I spend some quality time reflecting on the year that has passed and how each of our children has grown. It is a bittersweet process. This year, I can't help but notice how much our fifth-grade daughter, Riley, has grown socially, emotionally and academically. I would love to take all the credit for this growth but know all too well the real reason for her great success this year.

This academic year couldn't have started off on a better foot. Each of our three children was placed with teachers we had secretly wished for.

Little Maggie walked into first grade at St. Francis Xavier Catholic School with a great deal of confidence knowing that her kindergarten teacher would greet her with a huge hug and smile. Her teacher, June Durand, had "looped" from kindergarten to first grade with her class. We were delighted. Mrs. Durand is not only an awesome teacher but also a really neat lady who has a passion for education. Maggie describes Mrs. Durand as "the best teacher EVER."



Riley with Mrs. Furlong

Riley, however, entered fifth grade with trepidation. This was the last year before middle school and Riley had heard it was a tough year. Still, she was delighted when she found out her teacher would be Rosemarie Furlong.

Mrs. Furlong was returning to teaching after a few years of retirement. This worried some fifth-grade parents. They feared she wouldn't know current educational practices or that the students would be able to pull the wool over her eyes, if you will. But somehow, I knew Riley was in for a great year.

At the open house, Mrs. Furlong spoke softly to the parents and promised two things: 1. She would never embarrass or yell at a child in her class and 2. She would do her best to ensure the children in her class would "enjoy" learning. These two promises rang true the entire year.

Despite the initial misconceptions, Mrs. Furlong has a gift few teachers possess. Her careful balance of academic rigor paired with an expertise in guiding students through their critical fifth-grade year of social and emotional growth served the students well.

Mrs. Furlong celebrated every accomplishment academically and socially. She encouraged students to be themselves while teaching respect and passion for others. Her brilliant leadership in the classroom allowed students the time to socialize and unwind before hitting the books for robust academic lessons. Through this process, Riley developed a "love of learning."

Riley benefited greatly from this wonderful teacher who did not squelch her vivacious personality and endless energy. Mrs. Furlong celebrated Riley's tenacity and focused on all of the positive aspects of our "spirited" little child. The outcomes associated with having a teacher like Mrs. Furlong will last a lifetime. The level of confidence and kindness that has been instilled will be recognized for years to come.


I couldn't be more pleased or sing Mrs. Furlong's praise loud enough. For this year, the Furlong Year, we found a teacher with the innate ability to balance social and emotional growth with strong academics. What a difference a well-balanced educator can make. 

Photo special to SW FL Parent & Child