When I entered first grade I knew I could not read. Right away I felt very different from my classmates and school peers. My sister, a fifth grader at the time, always excelled in school and made it look so easy. My parents were concerned about my development in letter recognition, sound segmenting, and book correspondence. My parents fought for my education and for the attention I needed. Looking back, I would not have grown as a reader, student, or teacher without them being my advocates.

After many conversations back and forth, I was recommended for Reading Recovery lessons. I remember my teacher’s name was Mrs. Otto and that she made me feel successful every day. In my regular classroom, I rarely felt pride or accomplishments over my actions or work completed. I felt like I was in the spotlight as “the girl who can’t participate in that activity,” or “the one who can’t read like the rest of us.” That year is when I decided to be a teacher. I remember going home and telling my mom I wanted to be a teacher so I could treat students equally and have them feel proud of their work.

Although my reading journey is a bit of a blur, I know that in fifth grade I was reading at the top of my class in both fluency and comprehension. I graduated from high school in 2010 and set off for Wheelock College in Boston to study elementary education. My experiences in first grade were still driving me to be an educator. After graduating in 2014, I continued at Wheelock to earn my masters degree in elementary and special education.

In the summer of 2015, I was offered my first job, coincidentally as a first-grade inclusion teacher at Indian Brook Elementary School in Plymouth, MA, where I had eight students receiving Reading Recovery.

It wasn’t until I saw one of my student’s “Blue Books” that I became overwhelmed with where I came from and where I ended up. Seeing that book brought me back to working with Mrs. Otto and creating my sentences, cutting them up, putting them back together, and feeling successful. I believe I was meant to be in that classroom so I can accomplish the goal I set long ago; provide students the opportunity to feel proud.