

#040

Equations and Equality

I once believed that tutoring was merely about equations and formulas—then I met Remas. She had recently moved from Saudi Arabia, and while I initially expected our sessions to focus on solving math problems, I quickly realized her challenges were far more complex. Navigating a new school system in a different country, balancing unfamiliar expectations, and communicating her understanding in a second language made her every assignment feel like a mountain. Unlike my other students, her greatest obstacles were not the problems on the page, they were articulating her thoughts and managing the relentless demands. She needed more than guidance, she needed someone in her corner, someone who could believe in her when she doubted herself. That someone became me.

We began meeting once a week, but almost immediately, our sessions extended beyond scheduled times. She began texting me whenever she felt stuck about assignments, deadlines, or how to express a concept she couldn't quite verbalize. At first, I underestimated the weight of her struggles. I noticed the slight tremor in her voice, the way she would pause mid-sentence, searching for words that didn't come easily, and the frustration that shadowed her eyes when she tried to communicate her understanding. Every interaction reminded me that learning is not merely academic. It requires patience, trust, and the quiet reassurance that someone is standing beside you.

Initially, she seemed unsure how to manage her assignments and communicate what she understood. She would often hesitate, struggling to put her questions into words, and sometimes texted me outside our sessions when she felt stuck. I offered guidance when she reached out, helping her break problems into smaller steps and encouraging her to think through how to

organize her work and ask questions clearly. Gradually, she began approaching her tasks with more confidence and independence. When she told me she had completed a week's assignments without feeling overwhelmed for the first time, I felt a surge of emotion I could hardly describe.

As weeks passed, I watched Remas transform in ways that no grade could measure. She began asking questions confidently, tackling problems proactively, and applying the strategies we discussed to her other classes. When she texted me for guidance, it was no longer with hesitation but with the quiet trust of someone who knew she had an advocate in her corner. Seeing her growth taught me the profound intimacy of advocacy. It is not only about standing up for someone when they cannot stand for themselves, rather its to help them in amplifying their voice, nurturing their confidence, and equipping them with the tools to succeed independently. In helping her, I found myself transformed as well, developing patience and an acute awareness of the responsibility inherent in advocacy.

The experience with Remas did not remain confined to tutoring sessions. It instilled in me a commitment to advocate for others across every corner of my life. Leading my peers as tennis captain taught me how to encourage teammates who struggled with confidence or fear of failure. Serving in student government reminded me that advocacy often means listening to others' needs and giving them a seat at the table. As a yearbook editor, I worked to ensure that every voice and story was represented, particularly those who might otherwise be overlooked. In each of these roles, I drew on the lesson I learned with Remas.

I also learned that advocacy has ripple effects that extend beyond individual success. When someone is supported, they gain the confidence to advocate for themselves, to confront challenges, and to seize opportunities they might once have thought inaccessible. Watching

Remas navigate communication barriers and organize her tasks reminded me that equitable access to support transforms lives in both subtle and profound ways.

Reflecting on my time with Remas, I realize that advocacy is both a personal and societal imperative. It is personal because it demands commitment, empathy, and attentiveness. It is societal because it challenges inequity and ensures that everyone has the tools and opportunities to thrive. Every text I answered, every strategy I discussed, and every moment I encouraged her growth was a small act of justice, a quiet assertion that she deserved support and recognition. It taught me that the most meaningful advocacy often occurs in these intimate spaces, where trust is built and confidence is nurtured.

My work with Remas reaffirmed that standing in someone's corner can change a life. Advocacy does not always require grand gestures or public recognition—it requires presence, attentiveness, and a willingness to act when someone is struggling. My tutoring journey has shaped who I am and how I approach every leadership opportunity, from the tennis court to student government to yearbook. It has instilled in me a lifelong commitment to ensure that others have someone to stand beside them, guide them, and remind them that they are not alone. In advocating for Remas, I learned the enduring power of advocacy itself: to transform uncertainty into confidence, hesitation into action, and potential into achievement.