

Maggie Dufresne, Age 18
April 15, 2020

My years at Kaiser started as a refugee from another school. While the school I left was great, and for many students a wonderful place to learn, I struggled endlessly, both socially and academically. When I arrived at Kaiser it was refreshing to find myself among an amazing community of students. I was surrounded by kids who were having fun, learning, and being with friends. I loved my entire experience at a Kaiser Knight, but it is a memory from my 6th grade year that really stands out. I think it could be said that this event was going to change my whole life. All throughout my years of schooling I had had a really hard time with math. Math was not my subject and I understood that. Even though I accepted that I was never going to be able to conquer math, it didn't make the time I spent trying to figure it out any more bearable and it sure didn't make learning it any easier. In fifth and sixth grade I remember going to meet with different teachers during class and taking these interesting tests. At the time I didn't know that they were testing me for an IEP. I went out of my regular class and met with these teachers and for the first time I actually really enjoyed it. I thought of it as a treat for me. Maybe the fact that I got to leave class was part of the reason I enjoyed it so much, but these teachers and the attention they paid to me was amazing. I didn't know what an IEP was at the time, but I remember that later that year I had suddenly started getting sent to go to Mrs. McGuires for a bit after lunch. It was during this pull-out time that I finally started to "learn" math. During each visit math was our main focus. I remember going to this special class so clearly. She taught me about positives, negatives, long division, fractions, along with so much more valuable things. The support that I got from my teachers was overwhelming.

I started to finally understand math. Sitting in the classroom answering questions on the white board suddenly became fun. I was able to find the answers to problems on my own and was even getting pretty quick at it. I had gone through so many years of school battling each day just to stay afloat. When I arrived at Kaiser the teachers cared enough to throw me a life-preserver. The Kaiser family was actively involved in trying to help me understand what I needed to learn in order to succeed. I remember one day Mrs. McGuires was teaching me about adding and subtracting positive and negative numbers. I was sitting there with my white board, doing my best to understand, and finally it happened. I began to click, I was actually understanding the things I was being taught. I was so excited at that moment and it was one of the greatest feelings ever. I felt capable of anything. The girl that had always struggled with math and constantly wanted to give up, had suddenly been revived and understood what it all

meant. I danced and ran all over the room and Mrs. McGuire had just giggled. We were both smiling and my classmate was watching and laughing.

Going to Kaiser was great as a whole, but that moment in sixth grade has changed me forever. It changed the way that I was going to be learning for the rest of my life, and it allowed me to know myself. I learned that I was able to do hard things, not to give up, and figure out what works and what doesn't work for me. I finally got the extra help that I desperately needed. Among many wonderful experiences, this is the one that makes Kaiser so special to me. All of the faculty that was there to help me had made it known unto me. I knew they cared about me and weren't going to give up. I got the resources that I needed to help me excel in school, and because school was less of a struggle, everything else in my life got better. I got good grades, I was happier, and relationships with my friends and family became even better. I'm so grateful for all that Kaiser has given me. The amazing experiences that I had as a special education student have inspired me to want to become a special education teacher. One day I hope to be just like my teachers Mr. McGuire and Mrs. Lecours. I want to follow their example and inspire future students just as they did with me.