

Good morning –

My name is Katherine Kelbaugh and I am the founding principal of The Museum School of Avondale Estates.

As an educator, it is my practice to teach and I love this practice. But it is also my practice to learn – and I have learned so much from Tami and Jess over the past few years.

Tami taught me how beautiful grace and poise can look as a successful woman. I had the opportunity to accompany Tami to many meetings that were critical to our school. Her demeanor and interactions exuded poise and grace. And though I am not sure she knew, she was a role model for me.

Tami taught me the importance of hand-written notes. Thank you notes, just checking in notes, we appreciate you notes... Tami made several strong suggestions till I finally adopted this practice myself - to which I will continue with even more fidelity.

Tami taught me to take risks and that it is okay to go all in and be overly passionate about something, even in the early stages when you are just getting to know it. I met Tami for the first time on June 24, 2011 as she and Dave were considering enrolling Jess into the Museum School. On August 17 (less than 2 months later), Tami accepted the position as the first President of The Museum School Foundation.

Tami also taught me to keep Dasani water on hand at the school at all times. I almost learned this the hard way; On our tight school budget, I purchased store brand water to welcome much esteemed guests – You can be assured that Dasani water will always be fully stocked at The Museum School.

Finally, I learned from Tami the importance of loving your family and putting your children first. Tami and I had several conversations about raising children – from caring for newborns and making hundreds of “new mom” calls to the doctor’s office to supporting school-age children. She was so proud of Jess and Jack.

From Jess I learned that values such as respect, responsibility, kindness can be modeled and practiced beautifully at any age. Often referred to as “my little assistant” by her mom, Jess was responsible for efficiently delivering many important packets and documents between Tami and myself. I don’t need to tell you that this was done with perfect precision each time. As the mother of 2 young girls, I can only hope that my daughters grow into the respectful, kind, bright, and motivated young lady that I saw in Jess everyday. I hope that my girls literally bounce down the sidewalk with a smile to start their day, just as Jess did.

Jess taught me to stand up for what you believe in. Jess was not okay with squirrels being hit on the road in front of her house. As you know, she wrote a petition, submitted a solution to the mayor and proudly displayed a squirrel crossing sign in her front yard! Later, Jess stated that since the sign had been up no squirrels had been hurt and her furry little friends had never been better.

Jess taught me that the impact of an intelligent, kind, and respectful individual can be far-reaching. I had no idea how many lives Jess touched. The school has had counselors on site this week to support our students and staff. These counselors have helped students from over 5 grade levels and staff throughout the school, including myself, as we cope with the tragic loss of Jess. Students have been drawing pictures, making books, writing letters – all as part of their healing process. I have had the opportunity to read some of these pieces. I wanted to share some of the common themes in the children's reflections as they thought about their beautiful friend Jess.

Smart
Artistic
Nature lover – squirrels
Creative
Joyful
Red hair
Kind
Cute
Super
Endless

I have had the opportunity to get to know Jess even more this week as teachers, students and parents have shared with me so many memories. Our music teacher, Kathryn Bane shared a solo that Jess performed as an eight year old 2nd grader. Here are a few lines –

And when the night is cloudy, there is still a light that shines on me. Shine until tomorrow.
Let it be.

I wake up to the sound of music, Mother Mary comes to me - speaking words of wisdom,
let it be.

Let it be – Let it be - There will be an answer. Let it be.

The hardest lesson that Tami and Jess taught me was actually just this week. They taught me that as a leader it is my job to be strong - even during the most difficult and heartbreaking moments. They taught me the importance of strength while surrounded by devastation and I learned the importance of nurturing not only children but also adults. Though this is one of the most difficult lessons I've learned, I am appreciative of these two amazing individuals for teaching me.

Tami and Jess will be missed, beyond words, by the entire Museum School community.

Thank you.