

March 20, 2014

Dear Ben,

I wanted to personally thank you for your heartfelt talk at Sheridan College on Monday night. I went to the discussion with some preconceived ideas and I was prepared to take notes, as if in a lecture. But instead, I enjoyed a friendly conversation with a friend! You created a warm and safe environment in which to share and ask questions. Your sense of humor had all of us chuckling and smiling.

I especially felt connected to your life-story, as I am the parent of a child with a disability who scored low on an I.Q. test when he was a small child. My son spoke in gibberish and his answers were marked incorrect when he did not enunciate clearly. His answers were also marked incorrect when he answered the question based on his life-experiences rather than the expected answer. He knew that we put “e-sel” (diesel) in our automobiles rather than gasoline.

My son is graduating from college with a bachelor’s degree in May of this year. You helped me to reminisce and to appreciate how far we, as a family, have traveled. But the real success story for my son is the same as yours. Neither one of you let a number define who you are, nor did it define what you are capable of doing. “IQ of 63, So What!” is so true!!

Throughout your talk, your positive attitude and your confidence were evident. You are a gracious, mature advocate for yourself and for others. Your belief in looking for and in finding the goodness of others is inspirational. You are a true mentor to students of all ages.

Thank you so much for being an inspiration to me as a parent of a child with a disability, and as an educator who has first-hand experience with discrimination and bullying in the school system.

Keep up the great work! You are making a difference!

Lezlie Cantrell, RDH, PhD

*“Knowledge is the beginning of tolerance and tolerance the beginning of understanding.”
John Wesley Coulter, Education*