

# The Cards (Us vs. Them)

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I was gifted a stylish aluminum container of classic professionally designed white note cards for a gift. I had just made the switch from being one of us to one of *them*. That's right, I was to be a school administrator. Amanda, my favorite, didn't boo or turn her lip up at me but instead gave me this beautiful box of cards with my name *Anita Hairston* on the front, peeping out of the glass cover of the aluminum container. Of course I was grateful and even placed them on my new huge desk in my new office but to tell the truth, I thought, "What the hell am I going to do with these cards?" I have to admit they did look great next to my new name plaque stating I was assistant administrator. What I didn't know is that those pretentious little beauties would be my first lesson in some powerful natural leadership.

So my first month passed in my new job and it was time to start teacher observations. I was so excited because observing great teaching and being able to give important feedback to help one grow professionally was a thrilling concept. I am all about teachers teaching teachers. My first observation was a new social studies teacher who frankly was an absolute mess. On the same day I observed a veteran language arts teacher who was an absolute superstar. Regardless, both looked like they would faint during my observations. I knew that I would have to give them automatic feedback because I didn't want them to take that stress home.

I went back to my office just feeling sorry for both of them. A silver glimmer attracted my attention. The cards! I decided, with reluctance, because I didn't want to seem pretentious with my big name across the front, to write both of them a note from my heart. I sat and let the words flow. I can't even remember what I wrote. I just focused on

at least three positive aspects about them as teachers. I took a deep breath and placed them in their mailboxes. It was so simple.

After school that day is when I learned my lesson. The new teacher came into my office to thank me and gave me a hug. She told me she knew her lesson was a flop but my card made her feel like her future days would be just fine. She told me a stress had been lifted after reading my words, giving her confidence to grow in each lesson good or bad. Later, as I was packing up to leave for the day, the veteran teacher caught up with me and told me that it was the first time in her twenty-five years that an administrator took the time to personally acknowledge her teaching skills. She told me the note instantly changed her confidence and morale. She had tears in her eyes.

I give thanks to Amanda foreseeing how writing is so powerful—even on beautiful yet pretentious little note cards. I will always continue to write from my heart on all types of cards to any staff I work with. I have been deeply touched by the responses I have received from all recipients of this simple, natural gesture. One teacher told me the notes I've written, changed the climate of our school. That's just well, cool.

I have learned that leading with your natural instincts and heart, using the powerful tool of the written word can change lives or just make someone's day special.

So, being a *them* is a wonderful experience for me so far. Writing kind words to the populations of *us* just feels natural. So I end with this thought...You should see what happens to a school climate when you write a card and give a hug. Yeah, that's right? Some of *them* do hug!

Write on!



Anita and Amanda