

# JULY NEWSLETTER

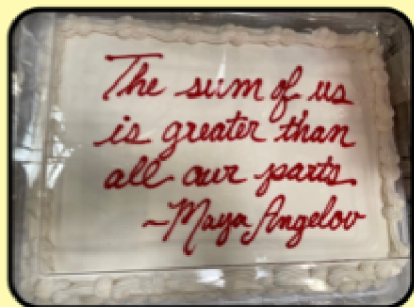
## A LETTER FROM OUR FOUNDER, MISS MARY

**When I first started running learning centers in July of 2009, there was this refreshing complexity I'd never before felt in my life.** I went from a vortex of cyclical exhaustion—double-fisting coffee every morning and breaking up fights teaching high school English—to this HUGE range of ages, subjects, and personalities. What a sweet, beautiful thing it was—so nuanced, so bright, so LIGHT. I felt ALIVE. No more early mornings of grading papers at 4am. It was a 7-day-a-week thing but it utterly FILLED me. Never before had I felt so invested or inspired.

Still, my dad asked me so many times—are you SURE you want the 24-hour responsibilities? The life of a business owner? There are so many easier lives, Mary.

But my parents, both physicians, were just happy to see me so happy. So stimulated. We all knew I'd never have the patience for surgery or patient care, but somehow I DID have this patience for kids. They enlivened me; they energized me; just buying prizes and books for them, or copying pages of their math homework, felt meaningful. There was fatigue; there was stress; it was all-consuming. Yet there was a lightness of being to it.

**Kids keep it interesting,** I remember writing in one of my first business posts on social media. And boy, did I mean that. Writing it out touched this deep part of me. I had pinpointed in that moment what I loved so much about working with all of these kids: that they do, without even trying—today and always—just keep things interesting. Perhaps that's what I love the most. Because of them, every single day is different. Every single day feels new.



Working with ALL ages is, to me, my life's greatest joy. As a passionate MFA back in 2009 studying fiction, poetry, and literature, I never thought I would say this but it's true:

that getting to see my students each day, each week—or even just reading their syntactically improved sentences through the Zoom snapshots my teachers send—is more fulfilling to me than even all the poems in the world I could ever write.

If you've ever met me in person (it's wild how so many of us have only connected via email!), you would agree I would never survive a day in corporate America; I would never last a second in an office. As many of you know, I don't even have a real DESK.

Owning this company is just this fluid, quirky, never-a-dull-moment thing I wouldn't trade for even the biggest salary in the world: laughing with the kids, thinking of every dimension of what can make them happy and keep them happy, and—of course—to translate that energy to my conversations with all of you parents—who miraculously happen to be fun, funny, and interesting just like your children!

As the cake here in this picture reads, though it never made it out of my house and to the party until the very end of the night, Thanks to all of you for keeping it one HUNDRED.

When this pandemic swallowed us up in its deluge of death and deafening silence in 2020, I have never been so afraid in my entire life. Saving my business was everything, and the waves were midnight-dark and tall. "The ocean is always trying to get into your boat," I remember writing in an old poetry collection, feeling like I'd finally found the perfect bookmarking quote.



**As I thought in that March moment in 2020 and now, YOU all kept me afloat. YOU were—and are—my hope, my optimism, my lifeboat.**

When I started delivering books, swimming through that ocean of deafening silence, with no kids laughing or talking around me anymore, I remember some of our students waving from their windows. My chest hurt. I would think in those moments, Will I ever actually see them again? See them smile and light up in person and not just on the screen? Will I ever even read out loud with them again, sitting beside them and feeling their energy as they feel their words grow powerful for the first time?

I also remember the first time one of you came to the door when I was delivering books. I was so embarrassed, dripping with sweat in the hot July sun, suffocating in my mask and gloves and an embarrassing outfit (read: pajamas). I remember thinking to myself, our relationship is REALLY real now! Haha. And, driving away feeling so connected to you, there was this strange freedom that just washed over me: there was no judgment. Outside the center, we were both human beings and the shared empathy between us—you with your house so LOUD and me with my home so quiet—even despite our vastly different pandemic existence, I was still Miss Mary to you, regardless of whether I was at my absolute most afraid and worst.



There is a vulnerability I am finally letting myself feel as a business owner—amid my deep commitment to professionalism, I am finally letting myself be myself. All of you are just that incredible. You are at once brilliant and human. I adore each and every one of you, and I'm not just saying that because you support my business. I genuinely LEARN from you as parents, as intellectuals, as individuals.

Thank you for not judging me when I couldn't find that one unopened box of silverware at the party. Thank you for coming—there were over 100 of you who showed up for us and it meant EVERYTHING. And thank you, for not only your patience, but for all the hugs and pictures and waves upon waves of friendship & understanding in the air.

Thank you for forgiving me for all the moments I take too long to email back, and for those days when I fall short of texting or calling and ask you if tomorrow is okay.

Our growth has been unimaginable—and I can honestly say that each time I pay one of my 80 teachers it feels GOOD. I still can't believe we made it to this point. I'm still in shock that after all these years of hard work, I was finally able to throw my first party to show you my gratitude.

How did I get so lucky? To have all of these incredible people around me? To have such SMART and COMPASSIONATE clients and teachers? To have these students who feed my soul and make me so beyond proud?

The cakes you see in these pictures never made it to party until the end, but BOY did they taste good. ;) I finally ate a piece after cleaning up, around 3am, and there are no words for how much joy I felt as I fell asleep that night.

SO many facets of the party we will do better next time, and it feels so good to be able to say that YES, there WILL be a next time.

...And perhaps, in closing, I might admit that's the most exciting thing about what we have the privilege of doing, thanks to all of you, who keep us going: **in business, we can ALWAYS be better. We can ALWAYS wake up and do it better the next day.**

Business owners love Mondays. Tomorrow, as I have since 2009, I will be starting fresh as I do each week, knowing that every day is an opportunity to grow, to be better, and to taste the sweetness of even the sweatiest, most tiring days. Knowing every effort counts because of the beautiful humans on the other side that genuinely appreciate it.

Again, I ask: How did I get so lucky? To know each and every one of you?

Thank you for keeping me going even when I'm the most tired—for being YOU.

There is always, at the end of each long day, the far-reaching joy of our lasting connections—year after year, whether we see each other in person or not.

**This July, please know just what a difference you have made in my life. I started in July of 2009 and I have never looked back.**

And YOU—your kids, their words, their essence—have always been the sweetness.

Love,

Miss Mary

