

Dear Students,

[Liz Oppelt](#)

Here's what I want you to know. Every year, watching you graduate gets harder and harder. This year at graduation, I cried about last year's graduates that I miss, this year's graduates that I will miss, and next year's seniors that I'm not ready to lose yet. I'm lucky: I'm an arts teacher, so I get a lot of my kids for several years and work with many of you very closely. We get to know each other well and work on projects that we are proud of.

And then you leave, and I stay. And every year, as you leave, my hope is that you know, that you remember what I hope I tell you enough: that once one of mine, always one of mine.

Once you become one of my kids, which happens faster than you probably realize, you always will be.

Once I've told you to drink more water, to stop drinking energy drinks because they are bad for you, to eat real food, that I know you can do better, that I am proud of you, that it's going to be okay, that you are a wonderful person, I am fully prepared to say those things to you forever, if you need me to. Once I've celebrated A's, new jobs, driver's licenses, new pets, great performances and new skills, I'd love to keep hearing about the celebrations after you graduate. I want to see silly memes, hear about college or jobs, offer advice or a shoulder to cry on, give you a hug, go to your weddings, send baby presents. I don't stop loving you once you walk across that stage.

At the same time, you are now adults, even if it doesn't feel like it.

And I was your teacher. I am navigating what place, if any, I have in your life

now that I'm no longer your teacher. I do not wish to insert myself where I'm not needed. You will meet other people, other teachers, other mentors. Most of you have family and friends to support you. That is exactly how life should be. But, please remember, if you ever need or want it, I'm here to celebrate, to mourn, to lecture, to help in whatever way I can. I don't care how long ago I taught you. I don't care if it's been a while since we've seen each other. Reach out if you need me.

I don't stop worrying about you or caring about you when you leave our classrooms. You don't lose my support when you move your tassel. Once my student, always my student.

We'd love to hear—how do you maintain relationships with your students once they've graduated? Come and share in our [WeAreTeachers HELPLINE group on Facebook](#).

Plus, [a letter from that kid](#).



Once You're My Student,
You're Always My Student

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