

## **Inspirational Teacher Melanie Mann** **A Story by Melanie Chancy**

“Did you get it?” It’s the question that emanates throughout the halls of North Miami Beach Senior High every year. “I got it!” I finally got the class I’d heard about since arriving, the class everyone talks about, the class everyone hopes to get...

The classroom is the most colorful scene of creative chaos ever experienced. On one side is a group of preschoolers singing as loudly as possible and on the other side, are groups of high school students, even louder than the young children. In the midst of it all, unfazed by the sound level, or the fact that she is outnumbered by preschoolers 20-1 or high school students 40-1, is Ms. Mann.

At first glance the room appears to be a free for all, and honestly, it was. When outsiders walked into the room they were immediately overwhelmed and assumed there was no education taking place and the teacher had absolutely lost all control. What they failed to understand is we, the students, were in charge of the classroom. We were in charge of our education and the children. We were students, but with a twist, we were now the teachers.

When I said the class was a free for all, I meant it literally. It was my senior year, and Ms. Mann was the first teacher who didn’t just tell me to be responsible, she actually provided me the freedom to discover just who I was, and allowed for both my success and failure. I was free to become an independent thinker and take responsibility for my education.

“Welcome to Child Care, in this class you are the teacher, you are the role model, and you are in charge of your education. What you will gain from this experience is completely up to you. Welcome to the real world.” That’s when it hit me. I am in charge of my destiny; no one else. It was her way of setting the stage for what would play out to be a life changing encounter.

And so it was set, my future plans, my career aspirations, and my way of thinking about education had totally changed. Ms. Mann had transformed me. I was now a mentor and role model to children and hoped I could always be. Thanks to Ms. Mann, I pursued a career working with adolescents and incorporate what I learned from Melanie daily. You see she and I now have a lot more in common than a first name, we share a passion and a profession. Ten years later I am proud to say I am not just her former student, I am her colleague. On occasion I hear the faculty talking about how loud or chaotic Ms. Mann’s class is, I simply smile, because I know something they don’t...

It’s not the class itself that all the students at North Miami Beach High School want to get, it’s the mentor inside the classroom. I got the class, I got the mentor, but what really happened is that Ms. Mann got me.