

Jeff Willie's Education Philosophy

School is a place of growth and development. School is a place we discover who are in a larger society. School sometimes becomes a place of safe haven from a chaotic world at home for many in our society. Schools are open doors to job opportunities, building responsible citizenships, character based education, as well as the necessary academia to contribute to the larger society. Schools and communities determine what's essential and vital for children to succeed in a larger society. Under certain circumstances, schools become the gateway which a majority of socio-economically challenged children see the world. Therefore, a teacher's professional behavior must be well above reproach. Professionalism embodies certain core values as the foundation of ones' professional behavior.

Professionalism and/or professionals do the right thing when no one is looking. Professionalism is kind to others and treats others the way professionals desire to be treated. Professionalism or a professional need no reward for being professional. Professionalism is service to mankind, service to calling larger than the person, a service willing to sacrifice their needs for the needs of others. Professionalism and/or professionals accept responsibility for their actions and make no excuses for irresponsibility. Professionalism strives for excellence in all their endeavors. Professionalism seeks and obtains professional knowledge and skills and continues to enhance their skills in their particular field of study. Professional teachers exhibit a disposition that facilitates their work with students and parents. Educators affect student learning, motivation, and development. When educators embodies professionalism and are professional to their core, educators are (1) enthusiastic about their particular subject and see the connections to everyday life (2) have a commitment for continuous learning (3) believe all children can learn at a high level (4) values the many ways students communicate and encouraged different combination models in the classroom (5) respect and develop a productive relationship with parents and guardians from socio-economic backgrounds and diverse communities. Therefore, I adopted and live by the Air Force Core Values, "Integrity First, Service before Self, and Excellence in all I Do".

Connecting with students is a major part of student learning. John C. Maxwell said it best, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care". This statement is very evident with students. Connecting with students will open them up to receive and believe you. Once students know your care, you have credibility. Some educators believe all

students desire to know their subject. Students may be required to take your class, does not mean they desire to be in your class. Once you are able to connect with students, a powerful paradigm takes place; student achievement increases. I have been able to connect with difficult students when other teachers believe the students are a failure. Parents don't send their worst kids to school and keep their best kids home. They send to school the kids God blessed them with and they ask educators to help prepare their rough diamonds for the world ahead. Students don't choose their parents or the environment they live in. "Low expectations from a teacher can cause a child to fail, but low expectations from a parent will crush a child's soul" (Author Unknown). I set a bar of high expectations for my students in academic excellence and also character and behavior excellence. When students are very close to reaching the bar, I raise the bar. There are couple very simple quotes I live by and all my students and parents embrace these quotes, (1) "What I see is what I do. What I do is what I practice. What I practice is what I become" (2) "If you are early you are on time. If you are on time you are late" (3) "Neatness leads to Eliteness".

According to Sydney Harris and I agree; Pupils are more like oysters than sausages. The job of teaching is not to stuff them and then seal them up, but to help them open and reveal the riches within. There are pearls in each student, if only we knew how to cultivate them with ardor and persistence. "Most people are mirrors, reflecting the moods and emotions of the times; few are windows, bringing light to bear on the dark corners where troubles fester. The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows" (Sydney Harris).

Yes, we do have an academic achievement gap. But my primary belief, academic achievement gap is caused by a low expectations gap from parents, the environment, and educators. All students can achieve at a high level; caring is the key that unlocks the mind. Student lives are transformed based on unconditional positive regards/positive affirmations. Remember educators, Maslow before Blooms.