

Good Morning,

I hope everyone is having a good week. It's BBQ Festival Week and Homecoming Week at the high school.

I was at Charles England this morning and everyone was decked out in their anti bullying attire. It was a great environment and smiles from staff and students.

Southwest has School Unity Day planned and at the Developmental Center, South, and Pickett, everyday is a holiday!!!

I want to take a minute to share with everyone some ah ha's that I took away from my experience yesterday at Lexington Middle School. I had the opportunity yesterday, to shadow one of our seventh grade students. I drove to his house, waited at the bus stop, and rode the bus to school with him. Then, I shadowed him throughout the school day in all his classes. My personal academic take away is that I have forgotten most of what I had learned about cells, but I still know how to diagram a sentence. (Of course, my teaching English and not math probably contributed to that.)

But, the real takeaway for me is my observation of our children. I spent the day with one cohort of students. The group was made up of approximately 25 students in each class, and they stayed together. A few students joined in the group and a few students left the group in different classes. But, basically, it was the same group of children throughout the day. So, I had an opportunity to observe many students in several different classrooms during the span of one day. As teachers and administrators, we seldom get this opportunity.

What I observed is something that all good educators know, but we sometimes forget. Throughout the day, I saw students completely change their personalities and their classroom interactions, depending upon the actions of the teacher in the classroom. Please note, that the students seemed very comfortable with my presence in the class and their actions appeared very normal (for middle school). But, the quiet and reserved student in teacher A's class suddenly blossomed and became a class leader in teacher B's class only to become distracted and need correction in teacher C's class. The obvious variable in each of the classes was, of course, the teacher. The population of the class certainly did not change appreciably. And, while the course content did, it was very evident that the difference in the children's personalities was due to the connection and strength of relationship that the individual teacher had with the individual student. It was remarkable to see the transformation of almost every student in that cohort throughout the day. I observed more than one student go from being mildly antagonizing in one class to a bright academic star in another. As I reflected on this last night and this morning, I keep coming back to the same conclusion.

What I witnessed yesterday is the essence of teaching! Reading, math, science, English, and social studies are vitally important. But, the true essence of teaching is the relationships that teachers can build with their students. Great relationships can cause a withdrawn and shy student to blossom and find their real strength, and teacher relationships can connect the "wild child" to the subject, class, and himself or herself. It is an awesome power that classroom teachers have.

A classroom teacher has the ability through relationships to enhance a child's academic experience, keep the experience neutral, or to negatively affect the academic experience through positive, neutral, or negative relationships. The teacher's ability to make a difference in the future of a child is why we all chose to be educators. Classroom teachers hold the keys to each child's eventual success or failure.

I want to thank all the teachers whose classrooms I visited yesterday. The efforts to connect and build relationships was evident. I also want to say thank you to all of our teachers who work in all schools. It is evident that you are working to build up our students through positive relationships and an empathetic and caring attitude. Thanks.

Rick K.