

“Empower Your Students For Success”

**By
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There are four basic tools that I consider to be important for our young people: education, attitude, team player and effective communication skills.

There is an old Chinese Proverb that says:

If you want to plan for a year, plant rice

If you want to plan for ten years, plant a tree

If you want to plan for a lifetime, get an education

I have been in the teaching profession for 51 years, and it is apparent that I love the profession. However, I have had many obstacles placed in my path, but I persevered and pressed forward toward that higher calling of Christ Jesus in an effort to be successful. I often thought about the words my mother said to us – “You can be anything you want to be, but you have to want to be and you must work at it because the world owes you nothing”. I did not comprehend those words at first, but as I matured in life, those words became crystal clear.

I tell my students on Day 1 that I will never talk down to them because I do not like to be talked down to; I will never embarrass you, but I intend to teach you, make you do the right thing, and I will write you up. Students need to know that you are concerned about their welfare. You cannot talk to students any kind of way; it does not work. I will not let you interfere with the educational process of students who want to learn. Now it is necessary that we empower our students for success.

An education is becoming more and more important in our society. Most jobs will be open to the skilled person with fewer jobs open to the unskilled or less educated individuals. Future jobs will require people who can communicate and who have proficiency in mathematics and literacy.

As our society becomes more and more globalized and the arena of competition broadens past municipal, state, and even national borders, the members of the workforce increasingly compete with counterparts whose life experience and culture are vastly different. Jobs of the present and future require greater technical and technological proficiency. Hence, our work as business and technology education professionals takes center stage as we move further into the 21st Century. Our Senators and Representatives tell us to never say Johnny is not going to college. Our job is to prepare our students for college and the global workplace.

It has long been said that “attitude” determines “altitude”. A person’s comportment, demeanor, and outlook on life and life’s opportunities shape that person’s future to an extraordinary degree.

Consequently, ours is the business of inspiring the students committed to our trust. In a world that has grown fixated on data-driven results and standardized test scores, the importance of such things as self-esteem, self-confidence, and positive attitude have been side lined almost entirely. I submit to you today that students who can use the most sophisticated computer programming language, but who lack confidence and a positive attitude will have great difficulty in maximizing their potential.

As educators, we have an almost unparalleled opportunity to shape the minds and perspectives of the students whom we

teach. Oftentimes, because of lack of exposure to differing ways of viewing life and education, many of our students fail to attach sufficient value to the academic opportunities provided them, particularly through the “free and appropriate education” that the state is tasked with providing.

We have the ability and indeed the honor of “turning the light on” for our students to allow them to perceive the world around them in a more informed and positive manner. Each day provides these unique opportunities and it is incumbent upon us that we make the most of every opportunity to transform lives.

More than anything, education levels the playing field and equips students with the tools to manipulate social and economic factors. Speaking of “playing fields”, I must address the importance of teaching our students to be team players. If not, they can become a hindrance to productivity in the workplace.

The ability to collaborate and cooperate to effectively solve complex problems and to improve the efficiency of processes as a team are the skills that employers in today’s workforce value most. The day of the Lone Ranger has come and gone. As the world gets smaller and smaller, people are increasingly challenged to interact and cooperate with more people who come from various walks of life and cultures. The ability to get along, although it seems so elementary, has become paramount to successfully navigate through life experiences.

Finally, we must increase our students’ capacity to effectively communicate. Students living in the 21st Century have no business whatsoever using words such as “Dis”, “Dat”, and “Uh”. These terms cause me to cringe on the inside. The expression of one’s intellectual ideas, point of view, criticisms,

and concerns, as well as the capacity to do so in a professional manner are critical attributes that must be addressed as well. Often it is not what you say but how you say it that makes a difference. Another important point my mother taught me. It only became crystal clear as I matured in life. Therefore, the ability to effectively communicate in both oral and written formats must become a greater instructional priority. Transitioning seamlessly between the worlds of the formal and the informal is an area of deficiency for a great many students we serve day to day.

In summation, the four greatest priorities that we should begin shifting instructional focus to are: technological education, attitude, team work, and communication skills. To the extent that we can increase our proficiency as educators in terms of increasing student mastery in these areas, our students will be more than adequately prepared to take on the challenges of the day, and we will have the confidence that we have prepared our students for success.

And so I teach because I have been taught. In my roster of unforgettable people are teachers who opened new vistas to me and influenced my entire life. If I can impart to my students a portion of the kindness, understanding, wisdom and joy-granted to me, then my debt to humanity will be paid.

I teach because I believe that each child is important and should have an opportunity to discover himself fully and become a useful member of society, a system in which teachers are free to teach.

I teach because ignorance enslaves while truth liberates
 I teach to dispel darkness with a shaft of light.
 I teach because I love children

I teach to make a positive difference, and so we will go forward with faith in God, serene and unafraid.