

Wednesday Dec 11- NHDOE Leadership In Education Banquet

Joey Lee, 2014 NH Teacher of the Year

Good evening ladies and gentleman, very excited to be here tonight to recognize and celebrate excellence in education here in NH, I want to start off thanking

OUR Emcee

My student! Mike Komisarek, job well done

As a fellow resident of New Hampshire, I want to Thank the Finalists and semifinalists for being effective and innovative teachers and for making your schools, your communities, and our state a better place to live. Congratulations to you for your accomplishments

Thanks to Department of Ed hosting this event and Hannafords Supermarket for sponsoring the program....

thanks to Cindy Chagnon, Lori Temple, and Heidi Welch and the rest of the selection committee for your role in recognizing educators throughout the state

As we are here tonight celebrating education in NH, I would like to share with you THREE of my teachers and wish to share a few things that each of these teachers have taught me. Further, I would like to share TWO observations that I have made as I reflected back on these outstanding teachers, and ONE analogy which I believe best exemplifies my philosophy to education.

These teachers are present here tonight, so I do feel obligated to reinforce they are in no particular order as I equally value all that they have taught me!

(Dad stand up?)

Dad

Hard work... hardest working man I know, to this day. My father thinks of everyone else and their priorities prior to thinking of himself. This I admire

Respect.. .peaks island...their island

Overcome adversity...athletics

Mom

Learn... school difficulties= mom, except for Math that was Dad

Grow... just try it, you might like it... travel Europe and world

I sure did learn a lot as the only boy at a girl scout camp for a couple summers when I was younger

Amanda

Love... its hard to objectively measure an emotion, but I know that you have taught me what it truly means to love someone more than anything in the world.

Wellness (to take care of myself and each other)... eating well/ limit stress/ relax/ TOO MUCH (Dover high school is fortunate to have her!)

I have **two** observations from the characteristics I have learned from my mother, father, and fiancé.

1) The cornerstone of my relationships with my students is built on desirable characteristics I learned from my best teachers.

I have a saying, a mantra really, that I preach to my students as well as my student athletes. **We (the student and I) will develop mutually respectful and honest relationships, built on mutual effort.** I know Mike, tonight's emcee could attest to this statement, as could any one of my other 100+students

I don't know how this statement developed, it just kind-of did over time, but as I reflect back on what I have learned from my best teachers (those you see in front of you), I recognize the significant influence they have had on who I am as a person as well as a teacher. Although my mom, dad, and fiancé don't claim this saying as their own, and might not have heard it before, they live by it. So, thanks mom, dad, and Amanda for establishing mutually respectful and honest relationships built on mutual effort with me!

2) I have failed at each of the characteristics that I have learned

- I failed to learn, made the same mistakes again and again and again (ask my parents!)
- I failed to overcome adversity. I can think of examples of when I let life get the best of me, let the students down, let my parents down. I have become a better person as a result of failing to overcome adversity.
- I have failed to appreciate the finer things in life. I've been guilty of rushing through life, my mother and future wife remind me of this!

I don't see failing as a bad thing. It seems to me to be almost necessary part of learning. Too many times, students (and adults!) are guilty of giving up when satisfactory results are not met. It takes GREAT patience, diligence, and effort to learn and as many of us know. Failure is a part of the learning process and should be a part of any classroom, but that doesn't mean that the student should earn a failing grade and the learning is done. Perhaps some educational facilities or educators could be guilty of this, giving a failing grade to a student and hurrying on to the next topic, unit, or assessment rather than allowing for a student to demonstrate the desired content or skill again a different way individualized to their strengths while holding them responsible for the same desirable content and skills.

I have **one** analogy to share with you, which I believe best exemplifies my philosophy to education.

Higher order skills are necessary in this globalized world where content is readily available and often overwhelming. Higher order thinking is challenging, but fortunately these skills can be learned, and with practice can improve. I often use analogies or metaphors in both teaching and learning.

We had recently, 2 years ago or so, put an addition on our home. When this was done, naturally the lawn was torn up. Dumpsters, heavy equipment, construction debris...it was a mess. Well, once the construction was done and spring had come I felt it necessary to plant grass!

I had 15 yards of loam delivered and wheel barrel by wheel barrel spread this loam over our property.. Lots of hard work. Once the loam was spread, I had to prepare the soil for seed. I equate this to the summer time when I, like many teachers, work the loam/ till the soil if you will, to best prepare for the seeds in order to provide maximum opportunity for growth for EACH seed individually as well as the lawn as a whole. I imagine you see where I am going with this, creating an analogy between growing grass and teaching.

As I roll over the lawn, seed flying everywhere, I make mental note, I formatively assess the lay of the land. Some areas of the lawn are a little thin (loam cover) while others are more plentiful. The distribution of loam, seed, and fertilizer are not even, but can I ever make prior knowledge, socio-economic status, or academic maturity even for all the seeds? Seems impossible.

Like a good shepherd of the land, I've prepared the environment to the best of my ability in preparation for the students. I spread the seed, maximize each seeds opportunity at success fully knowing that it is unlikely each seed will grow to my exact preferred specifications. In the winter the is very guilty of ripping up the asphalt berm on the edge of the property. each time it rains, the water comes off of the hill and straight over a section of our lawn and of course washes away the loam, fertilizer, lyme, seed, it's all gone! So, it appears outside influences have limited the growth of my seeds! which means I could give up, call it a loss, better yet like any traditional New Englander, ill call the local town office to complain! I equate this to reaching out to parents, counselors, colleagues, coaches, administrators, case coordinators, whomever I think could assist on our common goal of student success. This will assist in developing deep-rooted grass that won't be washed away!

My town laid a new asphalt berm, and the rain comes down the hill remaining in the street. I got support from town administration to create a fair, equitable, and suitable learning environment for all students, I mean seeds!

So, I wonder...

- If only I could get the rain to fall at light increments to moisten the soil every couple hours followed by bright sunshine. I need to provide what the seed needs to grow, but certainly can't control everything?

- Maybe another kind of seed will do better, grow better, but can I change the seeds I get, or change the way I grow grass?

- Seems as though grass seed keeps getting more and more advanced, I wonder if the way I used to grow grass is best current practice for advanced in technology in grass seed?

I could tell myself that when I was a little seed, I was taught in school this way and it worked for me so clearly all the seeds in today's society can be taught the same way, right? I can just ignore the societal advances, social distractions, and technological developments...

- If I just stand in front of the yard and provide water (or content) to the grass, will the water be absorbed by the seed? How will I know? Will all seeds take the same amount of water or will I be flooding certain seeds while depleting others?

-Last. If I were to grade or assess each blade of grass on their skill and knowledge, should I set a grading scale where they have a 35% chance at passing and a 65% chance of failing? Is that fair? Then, Should I only assess them once, equate that to a number, and refuse to allow the grass to revise, try again, or display their gained knowledge and skill in a different way?

Have no fear, Administrators present here tonight... I do have a solution to offer! Simply install an irrigation system for your lawn! But beware. Sometimes sprinkler heads stay up too long making themselves the focus, and in reality they occasionally can be more of a nuisance as they cut down certain blades of grass, can trip those trying to traverse your lawn, and can occasionally malfunction flooding students with tedious and extraneous amounts of content, I mean water!

Needless to say, this analogy could go on and perhaps I could be guilty of already going on too long.

As we leave here tonight, I ask that you contemplate who you feel would be your most memorable teachers, and ask yourself...

What did they teach you?

How did they teach you, and how did you learn?

Can you contact those teachers to thank them?

...because those thank you notes, random cards of appreciation, or firm handshakes is what drives us as educators to get up the next morning and bring the same passion, energy, and dedication to students we didn't know 6 months or a year prior.

Thank you again NHDOE for this amazing opportunity for growth, thank you Mike our emcee, for a job well done, thanks and congratulations to semi finalist and finalists, and thanks Mom, Dad, and Amanda for all that you do!

Thank you for attending tonight, safe travels home and stay warm! **goodnight!**