

As I Watch My Students Leave

As I watch students leave my classroom after their final exam, it is with sadness that I realize I will never see many of them again. I have been an educator for 26 years, including as a middle school math teacher, coach, assistant principal, and currently as a community college instructor. During my entire career, I have tried to bring the best out of each student I have been blessed to teach. I have tried to pass on to them the many positive traits that past mentors instilled in me, lessons that go beyond the syllabus, and which students will use each day of their lives. This article highlights just some of those lessons I have tried to instill in my students.

“Failing to Prepare Is Preparing to Fail”

From day one of my class, I repeat this quote over and over again. Hopefully, students will be prepared to support their families with the necessities of life. They will prepare and never have less than a quarter of a tank of gas in their vehicle. They will prepare and always have balanced checkbooks and be prepared to meet their monthly expenses and pay their debts. Notebooks are a daily part of my class and, from the very first day of class, I emphasize to my students the importance of organizing their notebooks to perfection. Our class notebooks are made up of nine sections, and we use each section as the semester advances. The notebooks can then be used as a future resource. My hope is that students’ preparation and organization of their notebooks is a lesson for life.

Be on Time

My classes start on time. I reinforce the significance of punctual attendance, and encourage students to arrive at least five minutes early to prepare the day’s materials and be ready to use them in class. In each class, students are required to bring a pencil, notebook, colored pencils, and calculator, all of which are used consistently throughout the semester. Employers necessitate that employees are on time and ready to make the company a model business. Employees need to have a strong work ethic to earn a good day’s pay for a hard day’s work.

Take Care of Yourself

In my classes, I stress time management and preparation to my students, as well as developing good personal habits. For instance, I provide constant encouragement for students to stay hydrated and eat well as a way to prepare for each day’s demands. A body that feels good, thinks good. Also, if

you dress good, you test good. Additionally, it is important to develop a good sleep cycle and exercise regularly. My hope is that these habits will leave the classroom and become part of students’ lifelong well-being.

Keep Your Priorities in Order

This lesson involves decision-making: students must make sure that their decisions are well thought out. They should have mentors and seek wise counsel when opportunity knocks at their door. In this way, they can thoroughly think through any decision and its potential effects on their family and others. This lesson also requires compassion and the ability to help others on their journey even as you strive to reach your own goals.

Never Settle for Mediocrity

As my students leave each year, I hope and pray that they never settle. I want them to be the best mom or dad, the best engineer, the best teacher—I want them to be the best they can be. Just as students correct any incorrect test questions in the ninth section of their notebook, they will learn from their mistakes and not make the same mistake in the future. They will listen more and talk less. They will have a humble spirit and always continue their pursuit of knowledge. Yes, it is a sad day as I watch my students leave, but I’m always happy that I was able to spend a few pages in a chapter of their lives.

What life lessons do you impart to your students? Tell us in the comment section or on [Facebook](#).

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