

Chalkboard

By

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“It takes many brush strokes to paint the portrait of a child” will be the theme of the 2003-04 school term at Gentry Public Schools. If you give that axiom some consideration you will begin to grasp how interwoven the roles of the different school personnel are in the education of a child, from the beginning in kindergarten to that final walk across the stage some thirteen years later.

I anticipate that some 1300 plus students will grace the halls of Gentry Public Schools this school term. Some 180 staff members will serve them. The teaching staff will compose almost 100 of that latter number with the others being administrators, counselors, cafeteria employees, bus drivers, aides, nurses, custodians, secretaries, bookkeepers, clerks, coordinators, directors, and so forth.

Each staff member is hired to perform a specific task without which a child’s education may falter. Obviously it is the teacher’s role to impart knowledge. Such is the primary mission of our school. Every other role has to be complimentary to that task. Yet while all other roles are subservient to that of the classroom teacher they are no less of importance.

It is important that each staff member perform his or her task in an exemplary manner each day as children learn truth from the actions of others in comparison to their spoken words. In each day of a student’s life various school employees add a stroke to the canvass of that child’s life. It is the sum of those strokes that determines the final nature of the work, again, thirteen years in the making.

It is important to understand that the acquisition of knowledge, its comprehension, synthesis, and application all deal with the growing of a child’s mind. But the thirteen hundred students will not arrive at school as disembodied entities. No, they will come with that energy and thought housed inside a body. Nor will they come as only a superior member of the animal kingdom driven by intellect, but each will bring a unique personality shaped by both genetics and environment. To provide a full education the body and “self” of a student has to be educated as well as the child’s mind.

Such would be an impossible task without the realization that the education of a child, this canvass of our theme, is not accomplished within the confines a classroom’s walls between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The education of a child begins with the first cry out of the womb and continues until the final breath is drawn. The first and greatest educators are the parents, siblings, and relatives of that child.

No child ever comes to kindergarten as a blank canvas; most of the background colors have already been applied. It is on those existing colors that public school educators must continue to paint during school hours knowing that their work has to be continued elsewhere at the end of each day if the final portrait is ever to take shape.

Perhaps it will be the bus driver who adds the bold stroke of accepting others with respect. Possibly it will be the cook who nourishes the body and adds the stroke of self-worth. Maybe it will be the coach who adds the stroke whose hue signifies fair play. Perchance it will be the aide's smile that adds the bright color of friendship. Conceivably it will be the custodian who demonstrates the undertone of being committed to a task. And, amidst all the supplemental strokes of others, it will be the teacher through all the years who shapes the patterns and designs with strokes both wide and fine in complete harmony with the strokes applied directly to the spirit of the child lovingly but firmly by the parent.

With these thoughts in mind, the staff of Gentry Public Schools enters a new school year. It is never far from our minds or hearts that you, the parent, have entrusted us with the care and instruction of the most precious commodity that you have- your child. We will not be perfect in all that we do but we will strive each day to be worthy of your trust.

Our job is not to please you but rather to provide your child with an opportunity to receive the type quality education you expect. We are honored you have allowed us to share the brush.