

Chalkboard

By

Dr. Randy C. Barrett, Superintendent
Gentry Public Schools

So it begins. Another school term has arrived. Another opportunity for students to learn under the staff's tutelage is here. Allow me to begin this first *Chalkboard* of the season by expressing to you that the school staff understands the degree of trust required of you to send your child to our school.

For the next 178 weekdays you are allowing us to be your child's "day parent". You are letting your child be exposed not only to the wealth of academic knowledge we possess but also to the example of moral conduct, our character, that we will model on a daily basis. You do this by choice. While state law requires your child to be enrolled in school it also allows you to teach your child yourself at home, to send your child to a private school, or under the auspices of Public School Choice, to send them to another public school district other than Gentry.

You did not avail yourself of any of those options. Either your own personal circumstances did not allow it or you believe in your school's ability to care for your child's welfare while at the same time providing a quality education. While we hope it is the latter reason, it is a moot point to us in terms of how we treat your child.

For the next nine months or so we are not going to let your child play in the street. We are going to make them wear their coats outside when it is cold. We are not going to let them continue to hit or be hit by other children. Should they have an accident, we are going to seek medical attention for them. Within appropriate bounds, we will comfort their broken hearts and apply balm to their bruised spirits. We will rejoice with their victories and provide encouragement when they stumble.

On a daily basis we are going to expect they follow our promptings. We will teach them what the rules are and expect them to obey. Beginning first with the least consequence we will discipline them should they err. The impetus of our discipline will be to teach them to discipline themselves. Our mantra will be that they respect others and expect to receive respect from us as fellow human beings living in a world neighborhood. Should every avenue be exhausted, those that will not comply or those who become a safety risk to others will be removed.

Understand that we are professionals. The conduct above described above is part of our job for we know that your child comes to school with a body and spirit as well as a mind. Though our primary mission deals with the education of the mind, we do not ignore the complexity of the individual. As educators we know that a hungry child, a sick child, or an undisciplined child will not learn.

Be assured that we do not wish to impose our personal beliefs in place of yours. The great majority of us have children of our own to raise and we face the same trials as you. We completely comprehend that we only serve as limited guardians of your most prized possession.

Among our qualifications and responsibilities, we also profess that we are not perfect people. Unintentional mistakes will be made in the performance of our duties. With your trust we also solicit your understanding when we blunder.

We want to be your partner. We need common goals. We need your cooperation, support and involvement in your child's education. While you most likely have fewer than five school-age children, we will have approximately 1366 to nurture each day. We may be the experts in pedagogic techniques; you are the expert of your own child. Should we ever differ with you in what needs to be done at school, the difference will only be one of determining what is best for your child within the scope of what is required of us by those who govern public education within the state. In every instance, we will seek consensus with you.

So it begins. Another school term has arrived. Thank you for allowing us to make our livelihood by teaching your children. Expect much from us, we expect much from you.