

To call oneself an educator, educational leader, or life-long learner, one must believe that all children can learn. I am an educator, an educational leader, and a life-long learner. I believe all children can learn. As the assistant principal of a middle school with over nine hundred students, I am committed to providing a safe learning environment for each and every child that enters my building. I am committed to hiring and retaining highly qualified teachers and support staff, who share the same passion for children and education.

I believe that this safe, nurturing, learning environment might look different for each unique individual child, but at the root of every decision I make, I am always asking myself, “What is in the best interest of kids?” “Are they safe?” “Are they learning?” It is my desire to create and foster an atmosphere where rigorous learning takes place and students grow and mature emotionally, intellectually, physically, and socially. Students need to feel safe to take risks. Students need to know that the adults in the building care about them. Students need to know that they must respect others and others must respect them. Part of my philosophy of education stems from the Guiding Principles of Responsive Classroom and the ideas of Roberta Richin’s, *Connecting Character to Conduct* (2000). Students learn best when they have academic and social skills and when they feel safe. Knowing the children I teach, knowing their families, and working together in a partnership, students can achieve optimum success.

Currently, we are faced with the growing demands that state assessments place on us. As an instructional leader and change agent in my building, I fight hard to share my philosophy with colleagues in an effort to overpower the stressors placed on teachers today. Understanding that how children learn is just as important as what they learn and

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not losing sight of the notion that all children can learn helps build the foundation of the safe learning environment. Helping teachers expose children to a curriculum filled with discovery and inquiry, hand-on opportunities and meaningful experiences will enable students to flourish and grow, set attainable goals for themselves, and become life-long learners.

Working with adolescents, or “tweens”, there are so many social demands placed on children. Creating an environment of respect for oneself, respect for others, and respect for the community is a constant in my daily routines and activities. As a leader in the building I know that the students are watching my every move and staff members are watching my every move, emotion, reaction, and step. I have to live, eat and breathe my philosophy. I have to be a role model for both the students and the staff.

I believe I have and will continue to work hard in establishing and sustaining a learning environment where students can learn and be safe. I believe I have had a positive impact on the students and staff in my building and in our community. I hope to continue to share my own passion for learning and model for them that I am a life-long learner dedicated to being the best human being I can be, sharing my strengths and never being too proud to ask for help with my weaknesses. Learning is a never-ending process of which I am proud to be a part of.