

# MOMENTUM

## The MRUUSD Newsletter

### November 2017

*From the desk of Dave Younce, Superintendent of Schools  
[dyounce@millriverschools.org](mailto:dyounce@millriverschools.org)  
Twitter: @MillRiverSupt*

*The following is the text from a commentary that I was asked to prepare on behalf of my peers and colleagues, the public school superintendents serving as leaders in Bennington and Rutland County, VT. This commentary was intended to respond to the previous statements of a local educator who penned a commentary titled "I can no longer teach", which elicited a significant amount of response. The intent of the regional superintendents' group was not to respond point by point, but rather to clearly express our foundational beliefs as educators. This piece is called "We Must Always Teach" and was published in the Rutland Herald on Tuesday, November 14, 2017.*

We believe strongly that all students, regardless of their race, residence, background, economic status, and emotional or physical health deserve the best that our society has to offer. Our students deserve the most skilled, dedicated educators available to support their journeys to adulthood and productive engagement in society.

We believe that serving as an educator is an honor and a gift, and not one that we take lightly or abandon. It is the calling and duty of educators to model wisdom, personal growth, perseverance, and an ability to lean in to adversity, to our society's most vulnerable and impressionable individuals - our students.

We believe that students in our wonderful state are, for all intents and purposes, outstanding individuals. They are affected by societal influences, of course, but are also in a position to have an impact on the future direction of our society.

We believe that our world is changing: in some ways for the better and in certain ways for the worse. It is the job of the educator to prepare tomorrow's leaders to navigate and impact that change in productive ways.

We believe that it has been common across history for generations to view those generations that come after them as less honorable, less competent, and less ready to lead in the society than themselves. Our parents' generation believed as much, as did their parents before them, and so on...

We believe that, regardless of political leanings, the discourse in our society today has become positional and fractured, with moderation abandoned in favor of hard lines. The remedy to this dilemma lies in the hearts and minds of our future graduates. Those of us who are more seasoned will not change. Our positions and minds tend to be more rigid and fixed. But, as our students enter the workforce, wise employers and organizations will embrace their potential and harness the energy of a generation that is ready to contribute and is far from hopeless.

We believe that every child's first teacher does indeed live in their home. But, we also believe that it is the responsibility of the school and its educators to endeavor to ensure success for each and every student. That effort occurs while students are engaged in the school environment; in the classroom or hallways; on the stage and soccer pitch. We seek to make the most of the time and opportunity we are given to impact student lives.

We believe that every individual who went to school in this country can recollect a teacher that they loved and a teacher that they couldn't stand to be around. The reasons for those feelings usually center around relationships, respect, dignity, and challenge. Which teacher would you have knocked down a brick wall to please? Which teacher would you least like to see in the produce section of the grocery store? There are very good reasons for the way you feel that are human and real.

We believe that every great school has certain characteristics in common: a school culture and climate that is centered around mutual respect, students who believe that they are and can be learners, educators who aspire to be better every day at their craft than they were the previous day, and leadership that can provide sound guidance, professional flexibility, reasonable but firm expectations, and that models the art of serving communities by serving students and staff. If this is not the reality in your local school, we can pinpoint the problems for you.

We believe that being an educator is a privilege, but it is not one that all are cut out for. Like any job, it requires certain dispositions, passion, talent, energy, and drive. When any or all of those are lost, our students are well served by educators who know when to hang it up. None of us want to stay past our point of effectiveness or influence, and we do honor those who have served with us, but ultimately decide that it is time for them to move on. Our kids deserve our best selves every day. Our students are a reflection of who we are as a society, and we owe it to them to prepare them to create a better image to look at down the road. Our profession is not one you should remain in if you are not committed.

Finally, we believe that, despite what many may suggest, there is still good in the world. That good exists in many places, particularly the hearts and minds of our students. We believe that we are fortunate to live where we live, do what we do, and feel the pride that comes from service and accomplishment with kids. We are proud of our students and our fellow educators. Our communities should be as well.