

What it Means to be an Educator by Rick Escalambre

I am going to start my talk by saying that I have reached my destination: my retirement from 36 years of full-time teaching. I decided it was time to enjoy the next phase of my life and be the best Papa ever to my grandkids. At the same time, I could not leave it all behind. I still teach part-time, do contract work, and promote this industry whenever possible.

I want to address the journey that has driven me for the last 50 years. The journey of following my passion and setting aside my love for reaching my educational goals of being a “Shop” Teacher and a Baseball Coach.

While writing this speech, I thought of the word PASSION many times. Finally, realizing that I would not live my PASSION as a professional baseball player, it was time to finish my degree and obtain a teaching credential.

After completing these goals, I was contacted by a local high school, asking me to come in for an interview. The teaching position was for an Automotive/Metals Instructor. My first question was: Can you teach Automotive and Metals? My reply was, I can teach anything. Why was I so quick to say yes, “I can teach anything”? That was because I knew I loved to teach others by inspiring them to follow what they believe is their PASSION! That is to service and fix cars.

Automotive started when I was 17, and my sister bought our first family car. Before handing me the car keys, she gave me a motor manual and said if I could fix it, I could drive it! Automotive (a small mobile business in the 70s) was something I did on the side while I was in college. I was a Drafting and Metals Major in college.

After five years of teaching Auto and Metal shops and coaching Baseball in my 5th year, we lost the championship game; I decided I needed to make a career change for the betterment of my family. So, I left teaching to be a tech and manager of a Chevron Station, eventually opening my own business. After losing our youngest child to cancer in 1984, I returned to teaching. Skyline College offered me a full-time teaching position. On cloud nine, I thought I had died and gone to heaven to be with our daughter.

What motivated me for 31 years at Skyline College? The word is **RESPECT!**

R – Set Realistic Goals:

- Take a proactive and not reactive approach.
- Always have a Plan A; if Plan A doesn't work, move on to Plan B,

- If Plan B doesn't work, move on to Plan C. I can't tell you the number of times we have reverted to Plan B and, occasionally, Plan C.
- Don't burn bridges; you may need to cross them again.
- An automotive instructor should take pride in being flexible and adaptable to student needs and industry trends. By following this plan, we are better able to serve our students.

E – Enthusiasm and passion for what you do:

- Enthusiasm is contagious,
- Students feed off an instructor's enthusiasm,
- Other instructors and staff feed off each other's enthusiasm,
- Most Administrators feed off your enthusiasm through what you do for the students.
- Enthusiasm by your students is your best recruiting tool.
- Bring High School classes to your facility!

S – Students come first:

- We clarify that the student comes first, and automotive comes second. Without the students, we would not have a program,
- Without interested and motivated students, how effective are we as instructors?
- Student input is invaluable to the success of the program,
- Make them feel that they have ownership in the program and their education; as a result, the theft and problems between students are non-existent,
- Students will set an example for new students.

P – Professionalism is contagious; display a Positive attitude:

- While we are not given the "title" of being a role model, we do set an example for our students by how we act,

- The professional and caring attitudes of instructors is an attribute that encourages students to work hard at achieving their respective career goals,
- Set an example by being involved outside the college community by being a part of professional organizations like ASE, CAT, NACAT, ASA, ASC-CA, etc.
- Demonstrate to students the importance of “Lifelong Learning” by attending industry conferences, workshops, etc.

E – Energy that is renewable each new day:

- We owe it to each student, each day, to demonstrate daily energy and dedication that says we care and that they are essential.
- No staff member should ever retire while on the job. Everyone received a paycheck for the previous month of work and should continue to work with the same energy for the month, the next semester, and the next school year.

C – Commitment to:

- Student,
- Program,
- College,
- District,
- and the Board of Trustees.

How do we accomplish this vital step?

- We do this by hosting a Christmas Luncheon where the students provide all the food, and we invite the campus support staff, college administration, Chancellor, and the Board of Trustees.
- At the end of the year, we have a graduation/awards banquet, and parents and the administration are invited.
- Regularly, each class has a barbeque.

T – Teach less learn, and they will learn more:

- Separate the “need to know” from the “nice to know”!

- Students today are expected to learn in 2 to 3 years what has taken some of us 20, 30, or even 40 years to learn,
- Conduct “split” labs,
- Use online services for class/lecture preparation, homework assignments, and quizzes. These methods of instruction are required during the hours of “split lab” day(s).

In closing, I say to you:

- 1) Becoming an Educator may not be a person’s PASSION in life, but once the decision is made to teach, develop the “PASSION” that will inspire you and your students daily.
- 2) Always plan lessons as though you see your lesson from the student’s perspective.
- 3) Technical knowledge is an asset, but understand that you may have to serve many roles for your students: father, mother, brother/sister, friend, foe, counselor, psychologist, etc.
- 4) You are building a foundation for future success in the automotive industry and, hopefully, in life, regardless of the path they choose to follow.
- 5) Identify future educators by planting the seed in a select few students and start them thinking about this early on.

Earn the “**RESPECT**” through your “Positive” Attitude and Actions; don’t expect it because of your title!