



MEDIA RELEASE

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Challenging, Encouraging and Believing in every student -a celebration of World Teachers' Day-

For Immediate Release, September 29, 2017: Jeff Goodyear has a simple strategy for guiding his students toward success - he believes in them!

Jeff has been teaching Grade 5 and 6 students at Poplar Ridge School for the past 20 years. He feels it's his focus on each student, and not his particular delivery of the Math curriculum, that leads them to high achievement. His approach creates consistently high class results, a vibrant classroom culture, and a number of requests from student teachers wishing to complete their practicum with him.

"I have high expectations in my class and for the most part they achieve," said Jeff. "But what's really at the core of what I do is developing relationships with them. I spend a big chunk of my day on relationships – much more so than on Math – and it works. I used to only know the kids who were in my class, but now I work to know each kid in our school. I make that effort because it really matters to them to know someone cares that much. I accept a lot of invitations from families to visit kids in their homes and I give up that time to show them they are valued. When my students know I care about them, it makes them care more about what they do.

"That said, we operate as a team here at Poplar Ridge, so our success with students is certainly not only about me. I do my best, but this requires a great deal of team effort. We have a great admin team, along with dedicated teachers who work hard for their students long before they arrive in my class."

There's a purpose behind everything Jeff does, even the things that seem like fun. Part of the Grade 6 curriculum involves patterns, for instance, so there are board games and memory games to teach strategies, skills and confidence. Students are welcomed into a classroom setting that involves flexible seating, a piano, and student artwork that covers the walls and ceiling tiles. They consider it their space and they have many opportunities to express themselves, to collaborate with one another and to be involved with work that empowers them.

"They feel a sense of belonging and love being in the classroom, and that's where the achievement comes," said Jeff. "Each day proceeds with students engaged in their work and feeling successful at whatever level they're at. It's the environment of respect and trust that leads to success – these kids aren't afraid of making mistakes, so they take more chances. My kids do their best not because they're smarter, but because they care and they are confident they can learn it. When kids know you believe in them, there's no stopping them, whether it involves basketball or fractions or group work."

Jeff and his wife, who is also a teacher, moved from Newfoundland in 1990. Jeff taught for a few years at Olds High School, until he discovered his love for middle school when École Deer Meadow School opened. He has taught that age group ever since.

"He shows that when we care about our students and work tirelessly for them, they will achieve," said Poplar Ridge Principal, Jody Dennis. "He has incredibly high integrity, and his words and actions match all the time. He models our core values every minute and our kids know he cares about them. All their success comes because he honours his relationships with them."

World Teachers' Day is held each October 5 to draw attention to the vital contribution teachers make each day.

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