

Miss Rhonda Wilhoite taught school in the Grant County School District for thirty years. Upon her retirement in 2002 she wrote and shared these thoughts with those who attended her retirement party. She humbly added that she did not profess to having always done everything mentioned below, but that each was a valuable lesson she had learned along the way. Following her retirement Miss Wilhoite began sharing these thoughts with her former students who were entering the teaching profession, and in 2012 this document fell into the hands of Superintendent Ron Livingood's son, Jonathan. The wisdom contained herein warranted a place on our website allowing not only our new teachers, but all of our staff the opportunity to consider her words, then to reflect upon their own careers and the influence they have in the lives of others.

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*Things I Learned While Teaching for 30 Years*  
by  
*Rhonda Wilhoite*  
*Teacher in Grant County Schools, 1972 – 2002*

*Concerning Parents*

- ✓ *Parents are your best ally.*
- ✓ *99% of parents care about their kids and do the best they know how as parents. They need your help to know what to do to help their child in school.*
- ✓ *Don't lump all parents into the same category.*
- ✓ *Communicate with parents. Keep them informed. Acknowledge their contributions. A weekly newsletter was the best thing I ever did to improve communication. Trouble starts for YOU when parents don't know what's going on or they have the wrong information from unreliable sources. Go the extra mile to keep them in the loop.*
- ✓ *Avoid using too much educational jargon. It makes many parents feel inferior and intimidated.*
- ✓ *Treat parents as your equal (whether they are or not).*
- ✓ *Enlist their help with their child. Most will be more than willing.*
- ✓ *Many parents are consumed keeping food on the table and a roof over their heads. When parents aren't involved it doesn't necessarily mean they don't care. Give them a break!*

*Concerning Co-Workers*

- ✓ *Make new people feel welcome, offer help. Go out of your way to include them in conversation and activities.*
- ✓ *Give co-workers the benefit of the doubt.*
- ✓ *Praise or acknowledge a job well done. Everyone needs a pat on the back.*
- ✓ *Don't talk negatively outside of school about other teachers or the school in general. It reflects poorly on your school and also on you.*
- ✓ *Everyone's job is important, no matter what it is.*
- ✓ *REMEMBER THIS! Treat each other with respect and kindness. One day one of them may be your Principal! (It can happen!)*

## Concerning Students

- ✓ *Something I've always known in my heart but only recently learned it was as important as I thought is: the need to be acknowledged is a basic need. Call kids by name. Everyone in school knows the names of the "bad kids" and the "popular kids" but do you know the "others"? Make an effort to learn the names of students outside of your classroom.*
- ✓ *Learn about students' lives – parents and siblings names, pets, likes and dislikes. Get to know your students on a personal level.*
- ✓ *Give them 110% when you're at school.*
- ✓ *Work to establish a sense of family in your classroom. Provide opportunities for the class to work together for a common cause.*
- ✓ *Motivate your class to be involved in school activities (special days, projects and events). Encourage participation and make it easy. Send notes home and offer rewards.*
- ✓ *Find time for fun and laughter each day in your classroom.*
- ✓ *REMEMBER THIS! Treat students with respect and kindness. Just like parents, they'll be more likely to remember how you treated them than what you taught them. One day they'll be serving your food at McDonalds!*

## Concerning Yourself

- ✓ *Keep learning.*
- ✓ *Give your BEST, but NEVER be satisfied.*
- ✓ *Seek out something new and different to do each year. It keeps YOU motivated.*
- ✓ *If you don't love being a teacher, do yourself a favor and find something you do love to do.*
- ✓ *Don't complain about the salary.*
- ✓ *Write the names on class pictures. Kids you never thought you'd forget.... you will!*
- ✓ *Take pictures of your class inside your classroom at least once a year and write the date on them.*
- ✓ *Never underestimate your influence on a child.*

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