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RESOURCES OFFICE

Dave Davis
Hillcrest High School
March 12, 2009

Teacher of the Year Responses

1. Short Biographical Sketch

Education History

Study Elementary and Junior High Grades 1 - 8 1962-70
Central High School Grades 9 - 12 1970-74
Southwest Missouri State 1974-75
Evangel College 1975-78 1980-82 BA in Communications
Drury University 1985-89 Masters in Secondary Education

Professional History

Language Arts Teacher, Pleasant View Junior High 1982-83
Language Arts/Communication Arts Teacher, Hillcrest High School 1983 - present
Adviser of "HTV Magazine" at Hillcrest High School, 1989 - present
Head Baseball Coach, Hillcrest High School 1985-1994 (State Champions, 1988)
First President of the Student Television Network, 1999 - 2001
Chairman, Student Television Network National Convention, 2004 - 2008
Director of "Camp STN" summer workshops for scholastic broadcast teachers and students, 2000 - present
Radio & Television News Directors Foundation Teacher Ambassador, 2002 - 2005
Founder and editor of www.htvmagazine.com, a website about our program, which averages 250,000 hits per month

Distinctions

HTV Magazine's National Honors:

- *Six Robert F. Kennedy High School Journalism Awards
- *Ten NSPA Broadcast Pacemaker Awards
- *Four STN Excellence Awards
- **Three National Student Emmy Awards
- *Five NSPA "Best of Show" Awards
- *Five NSPA "Story of the Year" Awards, and over 50 individual, national awards for student stories and projects

*Most of any school in the nation **Tied for most in the nation

Biography

I was born at St. John's Hospital on September 7, 1956. My parents, Wayne and Shirley Davis, are retired and still live in Springfield. My grandmother, father, and oldest daughter, Jenny, are graduates of Central High School, as am I. My younger daughter, Lindsey, graduated from Hillcrest. My wife Martha and I now live just west of Springfield, about five miles from where I grew up.

My childhood was incredibly happy for someone growing up in the turbulent 1960s. There was a war raging, and young men were dying in Vietnam, but in our west side neighborhood, thanks to parents who made sure we always had the things we needed, including the freedom to just be kids, my friends and I enjoyed what I can only describe as the "wonder years" of youth.

We all attended Study Junior High and Central High School, and to this day, my best friends in life are those I grew up with. Like Stephen King wrote, "I never had any friends later on like the ones I had when I was 12." We may be scattered to different cities and states, but thanks to the strong ties of shared experiences at school, and in the old neighborhood, we remain close.

Teachers influenced me each step of my life. Mrs. Punch was my first grade teacher, and probably my best teacher. She made sure we liked school. She made sure we behaved. She swatted my behind one day in the lunch line. I still remember that. Each day one of us was given the chance to skip our lessons and just paint pictures at an easel. That emphasis on creativity never left me, and I try to pass it on to my students.

In junior high, Mrs. Newcomer, Mrs. Wainright, Dr. Fisher and Coach Massey got my attention, and that wasn't easy. I was a bit of a class clown. The principal, Curtis Wilkerson, always knew every student's name. That kept us in line.

Then at Central High School Mrs. Graves scared me, Coach Walker often called my bluff, Cecil Mooney frequently counseled me, and Rich Williams introduced me to journalism, which became my passion.

I have taught at Hillcrest High School since the fall of 1983, longer than anyone left in the building. We started our broadcast classes in the fall of 1989, and we're now in our 20th year on the air. From one camera, one VCR, and one TV, to a newly-renovated studio with 14 edit bays and all-digital equipment. Who would have thought?

2. Philosophy of Teaching

What I believe in as a teacher is what I believed in as a coach. You must determine your goal, and do what it takes to reach it. In baseball, the goal was to win a state championship. That's the ultimate mark of success. We reached that goal only one time during my ten years in the dugout. Each day at practice we drilled, repeated the fundamentals, and pushed ourselves hard to reach the top, and that is what we do in our broadcast classes, but with cameras and mics instead of bats and gloves.

There are other, important goals along the way as you strive for state or even district championships. Things like individual improvement, and a sense of unity and teamwork. You work to be better or smarter today than you were yesterday.

I also believe in the power of constructive criticism, but it has to come from a place of caring and respect. My students, I think, understand that I provide tough, honest feedback so they will strive to improve. They actually get to the point that they want my feedback, and expect it to be pretty critical. They don't want a pat on the back for mediocrity. If you aim to be average, you will certainly hit your mark.

It's also extremely important to me that I empower my students. I do this by letting them have input into the kinds of challenges they tackle. Some will over-reach, but that's okay. We provide a safety net if they fall, because we are a team. Our broadcasts are billed as "by teens, for teens." We take that seriously, and it has helped us connect with our audience here, and with those who know us across the nation.

One thing that has made me a better teacher is the chance to continue to learn alongside my kids. They teach me all the time. I watch them master a technical

problem beyond my expertise almost everyday. I use the old line, "I'm a content guy," to remind myself it's okay to not know what all those buttons really do.

I believe writing matters. A lot. My philosophy about writing is, if you can do it, you shouldn't go hungry, ever. It's too bad so many teens resist the joy of writing. Nothing excites me more than a great script, or a well-turned phrase that makes a story's impact that much stronger.

My story is stronger because I stand on the shoulders of those who have taught me by their examples. I can not take credit for one classroom approach I didn't first see someone else using. Whether it was Sally Luke or Betty Thompson in an English classroom, or Terry Snider or Dick Birmingham on the baseball field, I was taking mental notes all along the way. Our administrators have also been an inspiration with their consistent support of the HTV staff during the past 20 years.

Finally, there are two phrases on the wall in my classroom that mean a lot to me. One is, "Say it, prove it." I stole that from Jerry Jacob at KY3. It's what we must do on HTV to have any credibility. Nobody should believe a journalist who simply states that something is true. It is the journalist's job to then prove it to the viewer.

The other phrase is why this entire Teacher of the Year process has been a particular challenge for me. "It's not about me." We believe that. We live that. And in this process, I hope I have made it clear that my nomination is about those who raised me, those who taught me, those who sit in my classroom, and those at Hillcrest High School today and in the past, who made it about the students. If I receive this honor, so do they.