



DE LA SALLE ACADEMY

Celebrating 35 Years of Educational Excellence

Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and why you decided to go into education?

Education was not my first choice as a profession. My preteen years were during World War II. When I was old enough to realize what was happening in the world, I wanted to be a pilot in the Armed Services. Patriotism ran high in that era. When the war ended there was far less need for young people to enter the Armed Forces, so my aspirations switched to becoming a fireman or a policeman. Times were very different then. Fewer than half the people went to college and most began work when they graduated from high school.



I had many excellent teachers in my life. The first was my Mother. She made sure I could add, subtract, multiply, divide, read books, and memorize the catechism. I was well prepared when I started in the first grade at Saint Sebastian's school (still in existence) in Woodside, New York. All the teachers were Sisters of Charity of Halifax and very few were less than excellent. All were caring women, always ready to help their students in any need. High school brought me in touch with the De La Salle Christian Brothers at Saint Augustine School in Brooklyn, New York. This school merged around 1968 with Bishop Loughlin School, also in Brooklyn.

Most of my teachers were Brothers, but those who were not were very dedicated men who worked for low salaries. Each of these men had a second job to support their families. Overall, it was a powerful group of men. The Brothers had more time for us, but I never experienced a teacher telling me he could not help when I asked. Despite the closeness of the teachers with us students, there were always clear boundaries, clear expectations, defined responsibilities, and still a friendly smile. There were two Brothers in particular that influenced me to think about being a Brother myself. They would sit and listen to me, never pressured me, and were always helpful in getting me to think straight. My parents and grandparents were the same. It was clear that whatever I decided to do was my choice.

It was not an easy decision to decide to be a Brother. The greatest influence on me was the way the teachers I had treated other people. From my Mother to those teachers in high school, I wanted to be a part of that. It did not occur to me that I was walking the path to become a teacher. I remember towards the end of senior year in College, laying awake in



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bed one night, and it dawned on me that I was going to be a teacher. It was a happy thought, but it also came as a surprise.

What do you most want people to know about our students?

What I want people to know about our students is that they are young people who are still learning and growing. At times they are incredible youngsters, working hard, growing to adulthood, thinking of the needs of others, concerned about the world, and worried about how they can make a difference. They are also human beings who are not perfect, look for guidance, experience pain, and sometimes do not know how to ask for help. But from what I see in the many alumni that come to visit the school, they have listened not just to the words that are spoken to them, but also to the actions they witness throughout their preteen and teen years. De La Salle helps them to build a foundation, but the youngsters do the work necessary to complete the building.

What values guide your work as a teacher at De La Salle?

What guides me as a teacher is that I am working with people, people who need help to discover themselves and learn what they need to do to be happy in their lives. That may be as mundane as teaching them how to solve for x in a mathematical equation, to sitting with them and listening to them in a way that they know that at that moment they are the only ones that matter.

If a new teacher came to De La Salle today, what advice would you have for them?

My advice to new teachers would be to make sure you know your subject. Be sure to use the knowledge of experienced teachers asking what works best for a particular topic. Also ask for help in classroom management. But, most importantly, always remember you are helping a young person to form herself or himself to be an adult.