

**PLEASE READ THIS. TAKE THE TIME TO
THINK ABOUT WHAT I'M SAYING.
IT COULD MEAN WHETHER YOUR CHILD HAS
A SUCCESSFUL YEAR ...OR NOT! THE CHOICE IS YOURS.**

Every day on my way to school and then again on my way home I read this billboard and think of WPA: **“We don’t accept applications, only commitment.”**

The only way our students will become scholars and move on successfully to high school and college is for every one of us to make that commitment. What that commitment looks like is easy to say, to talk about, but sometimes difficult to live up to.

Every day we start with the Pledge of Allegiance, Words of Wisdom, a nutrition tip, and then our Creed. We do this to remind our students and ourselves what we need to do in order to be a healthy, knowledgeable community member. The Pledge reminds us that many men and women have fought for our freedom and right to be whatever we want to be. The words of wisdom remind us that we have a choice everyday whether we will make the right decisions in the appropriate manner to push us toward our personal goals. The nutrition tips give us the information we need to maintain a healthy lifestyle so our bodies and our minds can function at its greatest potential. Finally, the Creed is recited first by the students to remind them why they are here and what they need to do to succeed in school. The next part of the creed is recited by the teacher to explain what they need to do to play the important role in their students’ success.

What has been said is a very tall order, but every day we need to ask ourselves, are we following our commitment to our students, to your children, to all of WPA? We signed a covenant that says these very same things and as parents and teachers we are the adults that have to make the toughest decisions or the hardest choices.

We need to know that you trust your children with us. What does that look like? It is when all of us work together: We all follow the procedures that maintain an orderly, safe, and nurturing environment. We support decisions that are made in the best interest of all (or at least the majority). We respect the role that each of us play in molding the children in our care to be productive students.

We need to ask ourselves as teachers: Do we come to school every day prepared for class, ready to deliver interesting lessons that reach all levels of our students? Do we begin each day with a clean slate and knowing that every child wants to experience success? Do we do

everything in our power to find ways to reach them and help them make good choices? Do we keep our parents informed of the good things they do, the inappropriate choices they make, or any changes that we have noticed and share our concerns?

As parents we need to ask ourselves: Do we stay strong to a routine for our family, such as a family dinner time, homework procedures, television and bedtimes that are age appropriate and meet their personal needs, be consistent and not give in to the whines and sometimes tantrums (I've been there) that they try to use to break us down? Do we act as role models in following successful life skills like punctuality, accepting consequences for our choices, following through with commitments, accepting uniqueness in others? Do we help make sure children are ready to begin their long day by helping them get organized with their things, homework and having something to eat in the morning? When we hear a teacher or the office call, are we focused on our child and their behavior and what we can do together to change or improve the choices they've made, or are we worried about everyone else's kids?

I find it interesting, but in 38 years it is very rare when I give a parent a compliment about their child that they ask if anyone else has been behaving like that. But when I have had to talk to parents throughout these years about a situation in which a bad choice was made, one of the first things that are asked or stated are: "Was anyone else involved? Did they get the same punishment? I'm sure someone else started it. They don't act like that at home." We as parents need to stay focused on our own children and how we want them to act and be prepared to move on to a bright and promising future.

It is time that we look at the covenant that we have signed, and the creed that we recite. I believe every teacher works here for the right reason, to educate every child that walks through their door. I also believe that every family has enrolled their students because they wanted their child to be in a safe, nurturing environment where they will get the best researched-based education possible.

THE APPLICATION FOR THESE POSITIONS IS THE EASY PART. BUT WE NEED AND EXPECT THAT EVERYONE WILL WORK HARD IN THE FOLLOW THROUGH OF OUR COMMITMENT. I MAKE THIS CHALLENGE FOR ALL OF US. IN THE END IT'S YOUR CHOICE! AND EVERY CHOICE HAS A REWARD OR CONSEQUENCE.

Sincerely committed to you,

Michele Baskin, Carey Shemes