

Hello Everyone and Welcome Back. I hope you had an enjoyable and restful summer, and that your school year is off to a successful start.

I was asked to share my speech with you being that I didn't get a chance to do it on opening day. First let me say that I learned a valuable life lesson due to Hurricane Irene. Basically, it's just not worth stressing over the little things in life. Many mornings in August I woke up nervous over delivering the speech, and we all know how that turned out.

I was both humbled and honored to receive the award. Does anyone really see themselves as teacher of the year?.. I know it's hard for me to....many times I still see myself as that average student from Port Chester High School,..the one that didn't always work as hard as he could have.. When I was first told that a few teachers at Rippowam wanted to nominate me for this award, my first thought was me, really....Then I Thought,... hey if they were willing to nominate me, the least I could do was give it a fair shot....it wasn't until I went further in the process and was told that I was a finalist, that for the first time I said to myself "I might actually win this thing".

Then I got nervous...mainly because I knew that I was going to have to do the speech on opening day....the second thought that came to my mind, was that if I did win the award, I was going to have to stay for the entire assembly. You see I usually sat right in the back section with a few of my buddies.. this way we could leave a little early, miss the mad rush, get back to school, and start getting ready as we all do..... I'm curious how many of you were considering the same thing....

I consider myself a very lucky guy to be in a profession that I really enjoy... 15 years ago I was miserable...I was running my own contracting business that I had started right after college, it was great at first, but as time went on, I knew it wasn't something that I could do for the rest of my life...I was searching for something new , but really had no idea what that would be... then by chance I ran into a friend of mine, who happened to be the varsity baseball coach at Port Chester High School..Mike asked me if I wanted to help him coach the team that season...I had a great time and realized that I wanted to work with kids full-time. That fall I enrolled in the Intern program at UB, and my new journey was off and running.

The best part of this process for me was getting to reflect on how I came to be Teacher of the Year. At the spotlight awards I was able to thank members of my family for their support which continues today, as well as some of the people that helped me transition into the teaching profession.

But as I continued to reflect, I started to think about all of the teachers who were a positive influence in my life...teachers that always believed that I could be successful even though I didn't always show them in class....people like

Mr. Joe Armiento..my tough as nails 5th grade teacher or,

Mr. Robert Long...my Junior HS guidance counselor who as a 9th grader I visited on almost a daily basis, sometimes just to vent, other times just to get out of class...now we all know that doesn't occur in our classes right??... and

Mr. Pete Pergamo....my HS baseball coach,(Coach P as we called him) who taught us to have fun..without ever having to sacrifice the fundamentals of a game we all loved to play ....I don't think it is a coincidence at all that I became a teacher, ...one who went on to coach both baseball and football at Port Chester High School for more than 13 years, or one that brings to my students the same tough love approach that Mr. Armiento brought to me,... I thought about becoming a guidance counselor like Mr. Long awhile back...but frankly there is just too much paperwork.....

An overriding theme in my life is simple,... I always had people that believed in me.... people that were willing to help me out anyway they could, for this I am extremely lucky and thankful.... and it is because of this that I feel it is my duty to continue to believe in my students just like the teachers before had believed in me....

I am proud to say that I am a teacher... proud to be one of you, and know that somewhere around the world today one of your former students is thinking about the impact that you had on their life....Unfortunately, the teachers that I have spoken about today are no longer with us, but if they were,... I would simply say thank you for always believing in me. And on behalf of all of your former students that may never have the opportunity to tell you, I'm sure they would want me to say, "thank you for all that you've

done and all that you will continue to do.” in helping to make a difference in the lives of your students”

I leave here today with some thoughts for our new teachers, who have embarked on a profession like no other.....first of all welcome to one of the greatest professions in the world.....I think the only thing I would rather do is be the bench coach for the New York Yankees, but I know that’s not going to happen this year.

As you begin your first few days, weeks, and months....you are going to get a lot of advice from a lot of different people...some of it good....and some not so good... hopefully you’ll say that my advice was helpful...

1st: HAVE FUN,.. you’re dealings with kids,.. kids that have a thousand other things going through their heads... besides what you are trying to teach them...and don’t ever lose your sense of humor, because it’s going to help you through the roller coaster that you’ll be on shortly.

2nd: During my 1st year of teaching I got great advice from a teacher who I met during one of our PD days...I knew him only as Jimmy Mac, because that’s what his sticker said... I believe he was a teacher at Dolan...As you’ll soon find out, most PD days start out the same way...with all of us complaining about something...this day we were venting about our kids not completing their homework....now that’s a shock....Jimmy Mac pulled me aside after the vent session and said to me, kid...., let me give you some advice...you can’t control what your students do at home, you can’t control what they do in other classes, the only thing you can control is what you do when you close the door... so make that period the best you can each day....

And finally I’d like to share with you the best piece of advice anyone ever gave me..... It came during my first week of teaching, from a colleague turned friend ...Pat Alarcon, which many of you know.....During our break Pat says to me, come on let’s eat,.. not a surprise...so we go down to the cafeteria to grab some lunch. As we go to sit down I’m looking at his plate, it’s got a lot more food than mine,... and he’s laughing hysterically....so he says to me like only Pat could, CUZZZZZ..do I have to teach you everything, Take care of the secretaries, cafeteria workers, and custodians,

because that's who is really in charge...Thanks everyone...HAVE A GREAT YEAR

Please excuse the format of the text. With new students daily, tests to be graded, and open house around the corner, there is just no time. I KNOW YOU CAN ALL RELATE TO THAT.