

## *An Inspirational Message from Eugenia Floyd*

2021 NC Burroughs Wellcome Fund Teacher of the Year



*Dear Educators of North Carolina,*

Welcome to the 2021-2022 school year. Thank you for choosing to be part of the teaching profession. We again, are beginning another school year, facing many challenges. We have faced the challenges of determining what this school year will look like, what will be taught and how we can properly support the children that are in front of us daily. We also work tirelessly to care for the safety and welfare of our students, families, and friends as we continue to navigate this pandemic. The importance of our roles as educators has been amplified throughout our community and nation because our society has realized that the work we

do for children is special. The following are just a few bits of advice as you begin this wonderful, and impactful journey into the teaching profession this school year.

### **#1 GET EXCITED**

Back in my high school days my cheerleading coach used to shout “Get Excited” at games, practice, and even competitions. This was her way of letting us know she wanted us to increase our energy in every way. She wanted us to make our smiles bigger, our motions sharper and have a great time doing it all. My advice to you is to **GET EXCITED**.

You are now working in a career where you get the privilege to motivate, support and have a pretty large influence on children. Your energy will set the tone daily in your classroom. Your teaching moves will impact student understanding and engagement, and your ability to show students the fun of learning can be critical to their feelings about learning in general. You have a job that is the cornerstone of all other professions. Be excited in all that you do.

### **#2 MISTAKES WILL HAPPEN**

You are in no way a superhuman, Marvel, or DC character. Even Ms. Frizzle from the *Magic School Bus* would say “oopsies” every once in a while. Unlike Ms. Frizzle, you are human. Our humanity is what our students need to see. There are many lessons that will not go quite as you planned, and your students may not share your excitement in a particular unit of lesson. I, too, have made plenty of mistakes, especially during virtual learning, and that is ok. Making mistakes is so wonderful because you can turn those setbacks into something even more special for your students. You are letting them know that mistakes happen, and things don’t always work out as you planned, even if you’ve spent hours planning them. Besides, we should be telling kids exactly that. We should be allowing them to make mistakes and teaching them how to bounce back from them. More importantly, perseverance and resilience are some things we want kids to have too. They are not only necessary to meet many academic standards, but are necessary life skills.

### #3 YOU WORK FOR CHILDREN

You don't work for anyone else but children! The needs of your students will always be the driving force of every instructional and emotional move you make in your classroom. Nobody knows the students in your classroom community better than you.

### #4 USE YOUR TOOLS

Your tools are your resources. Your mentors are a resource, your administrators, counselors, social workers, school psychologist, and every person that works in a school building are a resource for you. One of the most important resources is the people you meet with and work with daily, your professional learning community. I have discussed and collaborated with my professional learning community, the fourth-grade teachers at Mary Scroggs Elementary School, on every unit, lesson, and initiative. I have also learned so much from all the people in my building because I knew I didn't know everything. Some of the things students needed were out of my scope, so I relied on others in order to give students the support they need. I also made sure I was always open to the thoughts and ideas of others to support students, and I know you will be too.

### #5 TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Taking care of yourself is vital for you and your students. If you don't take care of yourself, you can't take care of the students that you impact daily. So, what does taking care of yourself look like? Taking care of yourself means you know when to put the work away. Midnight is not always the best time to work. Trust the fact that you know your kids and that whatever you are trying to do late at night is not more important than the work that occurs when the kids are right in front of you. This also looks like you making sure you give time to your other passions outside of this work. For me, time spent with my family and friends is everything. I haven't modeled writing a personal narrative yet for my 4th graders that doesn't include my niece and nephews. Because I take that time to care for myself, the authentic work I do for my kids shows up daily in my lessons.

As you begin the 2021-2022 school year, get excited about the impact you will have on children, make a few mistakes, remember who you work for, use your tools, and always take care of yourself. Although we have been faced with many challenges, just like always we will continue to do great things for children.

*Have a wonderful school year!*

**-Eugenia**

