

Appreciation

10/2/20

From The Principal's Pen

John Muir once said, "Going to the mountains is going home." It's the slogan on the front of my favorite t-shirt. The t-shirt is beginning to show its age, but I still pack it in the bottom of my bag on every trip I take. I will have it on for every return trip home. My wife jokes that we will have to stop traveling when the t-shirt finally wears out. While I love to travel, I love home even more. The mountains of Western North Carolina are special. The smell of the springtime bloom, or sticking your feet in a mountain stream after a long hike in the heat of summer. The view from a mountaintop as the leaves change in October. The stillness of a winter snowstorm. I love home. There is nothing like it in the world!

There is a moment at the end of every trip. It's just north of Spartanburg if we are traveling home from the beaches south of us. Coming from Raleigh, it's just west of Morganton as you top a small hill. Traveling east from Knoxville, it's just after you turn west where I-40 and I-81 split near Dandridge, TN. It's the moment the mountains come back into view. If I am traveling without my wife, it's a reminder to call and let her know I am almost home. I don't have to tell her where I am, she knows. She would say that she can hear it in my voice. There is something about that moment you get the first glimpse of home!

We take for granted so much of the world around us. Living here day in and day out, we gradually lose our appreciation for what we get to live in each and every day. Over the past few months, I have tried to pause each morning before I step off my front porch and appreciate the view. Sometimes we take what we have for granted.

That can't be more true than with many of the common activities that have been limited over the past six months, and none have been as significant to many of us as the inability to have face-to-face instruction with our students. I want to commend our teachers and students for doing their very best in a difficult situation. While we will continue the remote instruction of some of our students, it is impossible to provide the same quality of education remotely as we can provide in person. In a few days, we will have the opportunity to have many of our elementary students back in classrooms. We are excited to welcome them back.

Appreciation has several definitions. It is defined as the recognition and enjoyment of the good qualities of someone or something. It can also be defined in economic terms as the increase in the value of something. The law of supply and demand dictates that it is natural for value to increase

when an item is in limited supply. In the past few months, the value of face to face education has certainly increased. It has appreciated, and we appreciate it much more than we did before.

This pandemic has helped us get more comfortable with change. When we return to school next week, we want to do it right. We want to keep our students safe. But, we are also reminded that we are not guaranteed that this will last. We could be forced to send students back home at any point in the school year. While we are planning for the worst, we hope that we will continue with having students in school for the rest of the year. We must make every moment count.

As I pulled onto campus this morning, I was reminded that we would have buses arriving the next time I go through this morning ritual. This was the last morning of work without our students. It was an “almost home” moment. The same emotions I feel as I top the hill near the Burke County line and see the mountains in the distance after being gone for a while, I felt this morning. There is an excitement in the air. There is an anticipation for the days ahead. Just like going home!

“The sun does not shine for a few trees and flowers, but for the wide world’s joy.”

Henry Ward Beecher