

WHO I AM STORY

Having grown up in a very small community in Southwest Georgia, I was fortunate to live in a home with loving parents and a loving grandmother. The extended family I was also blessed to have created a very nurturing environment for a child, even a tomboy ... I boxed, played football and baseball in full gear...shot out the back window imitating the Rifleman...*but my family survived and so did I.....*

After graduating from college, I began teaching middle school students. It became readily apparent during my field experience and early years teaching that many children did not have the supportive home environment I was fortunate to have.

To whom much is given, much is required. Thus, my journey as an educator, filled with a desire to serve, began some 30 years ago.

Who I am can best be seen in all that I have learned over the years from so many individuals. Some of what I learned falls in the category of worst practices, for which I made a conscious decision not to emulate. Those things that most impacted my career in positive ways as an educator, I learned primarily from my *Teachers Hall of Fame* ranging from first grade to graduate school and on to those teachers I have supervised over the years.

From my first grade teacher, Elizabeth Wiggins, I learned...

- Every child deserves a quality education, and it is up to us to make that happen – *no excuses.*
- Decisions made in a classroom must be driven by doing what is best for children.
- All children can learn given the right opportunities and the needed support.

From Mary Allen, my team leader and mentor teacher, I learned...

- Children will accomplish exactly what is expected of them.
- All children deserve to be held to high expectations.
- Failure should never be a choice for children, because without support, it is the easiest option for some.
- Integrity, loyalty, and trust are crucial.

From Sylvia Hutchinson, my major professor, I learned...

- Relationships matter...relationships with children, relationships with colleagues, relationships with bosses...
- Adults need encouragement and support.
- Teachers can be wonderful role models for children and colleagues, for that matter.

From Sandy Strickland, a master teacher I had the pleasure of supervising, I learned...

- There is no substitute for a teacher having an extensive “bag of tricks” or effective teaching strategies.
- Children respond powerfully to effective teachers.
- Although some teachers have a gift for teaching, teachers who may not be as gifted can certainly grow and develop.

In our school district, the decisions are consciously and consistently made in the best interest of our children, as we strive to provide a quality education for all students. In our system, we are creating a culture of high expectations, high academic achievement, and accountability. We have, perhaps, some of the highest promotion guidelines in the state. Yet, at the same time, our safety net and credit recovery support is extraordinary. Indeed our student expectations are high, and our expectations for all staff continue to increase. Our children and staff are rising to the challenge. Though not easy, there are no excuses that will prevent our getting the job done. We are accountable to our students, parents, community, and each other, and that accountability drives our efforts. Now, *finally*, more leaders in the community than ever before have begun to see the real necessity and benefits derived from embracing the system.

A feeling of family permeates our system...from the classroom, to the operational support staff and the central office. Every year we work to build stronger relationships; relationships that embody care and concern as well as foster loyalty, trust and integrity. We are working to ensure that every child has an advocate, especially those students who struggle and need someone to love them.

Our efforts are working. Every year, we **are** *moving to higher ground*. Our journey of service continues. We will get there. I am confident that we will. For our children, we must.