Kyle Hoover Oct 19 2016

Abbeville High School

C: So it’s October 19th 2015 and I am in Abbeville High School with Kyle Hoover and the last time I was here was in January 2008 and you were teaching in Calhoun Falls and then after two years there, you went to Dixie (H.S.) and after…how long were you at Dixie High School?

K: Four years.

C: Four years and now this is your what year here?

K: Fourth.

C: Fourth year at Abbeville High School. All in the same county?

K: Correct.

C: All under the same administration?

K: Um, hmm.

C: Well, the exception of building principals and all that?

K: Correct.

C: So let’s go ahead and start. First question has two parts. It’s a question I asked you back in 2008. How do you define success in teaching and do you believe GVSU prepared you for success in the classroom?

K: I think success in teaching is how your students are able to use what you taught them. And that’s the whole point is to be able to take what you are taught and put it to life, to use it, to further their education down the road. And I think GVSU has really helped me with that.

C: I credit, too, and you can correct me, but I think your life experience, that…and why I was interested in you from the “get go”, I don’t know if you realize that, but I always appreciated people coming back (into education) that had different work experiences into teaching because they do have a different perspective than a traditional student. I always thought that you looked at, “How are they going to use what I am going to teach?” Versus any other kind of point of view. It’s not that traditional students don’t talk about the applicability of what they are teaching but I think the people coming back from different careers have an even closer, tighter perspective on that.

K: That’s true. I always remembered when I was in school, “What was the purpose of learning…I mean why am I learning this stuff?” Due to the fact that I have done so many different things before I became a teacher I could answer some of those questions. “Why do I learn math?” “Why do I learn history?” “Why do I learn science?” “Well, ok, you need this for that.” “This is how it relates to today.” That’s one of the most important parts is tying with the learning today is knowing why they are learning it but how it directly affects them. I guess in a lot of sense it makes history easier to teach because it is relevant, even though history is what happened to all of us but it’s relevant to what is going to happen to us tomorrow.

C: Right and there is several examples I took down in my notes when you were talking about the local economy, whether it was the cost of, the actual living wage or how it related to taxes in the area or whatever that I saw, even when you were teaching World History over at Calhoun Falls, that you were trying to make application to the students’ lives and how it was relevant and even more so, obviously in U.S. and Government class. So that makes sense to me. I think it’s going to be tough to parse out, maybe in your case, more than some, how much Grand Valley was able to add to what you thought was important and how you applied it to your teaching and what you already bought to the table.

K: Well, the credit there lies to making me consider that even more because as I sat next to younger students, you know, traditional students, and the questions I listened to them ask, or what they did or did not know, kind of amplified where I needed to go with this and the experience in the classroom was definitely…it’s a ‘must have’…you have got to be able to learn and teach history but you need to understand that you are dealing with different people from different cultures in the classroom as well as in life…it makes you more open to how things fit together. Being in the classroom and the things I learned at GVSU were very critical at that point because it gave me…even with all my experience, you still have the factor of “me”. Ok? It’s me. When you start learning, when I went back to college it was a whole different reality. I had to think past “me”…I hate to keep using that, but that’s the best analogy and how it applied to everybody else. That was very important.

C: Boy. I know so much of your story so I am really interested in how you are going to answer #2. What do you view as the biggest challenges to your career, as a teacher?

K: Biggest challenges? As a teacher or in the classroom?

C: However you want to handle it Kyle. It’s your answer.

K: The biggest challenges, two things that I…it’s like answering multiple questions. (6:02) Obviously, economics of the school. Being in a district where money is big problem. We’re operating right now in 1977 budget levels in a building that should have been replaced years ago. (The sound in the background is an air purifier. Kyle told me that they found black mold above the drop down ceiling and they don’t have the money to thoroughly clean the problem, nor replace the ceiling.) But those are challenges but they are not…they can’t be overcome and you have to adapt and sometimes learning to adapt to things that you think are wrong can be the biggest challenge. It’s wrong that we are in this building. It’s wrong that we don’t have the money but you need to learn to get around that, and take those challenges and redirect them into something positive. You may have an old school. Ok. Let’s work on school pride, school involvement, parent involvement. Whatever we can to try to make a change. What you have is what you have. The building is replaceable, but what you are trying to get the kids to walk out the door with isn’t. Other challenges and one of the things that I’m not good at is politics. I’m going to call it like I see it. I’m hear to teach kids, not dance around the topic. If something needs to be done or I think something will I will say something to, hopefully, the appropriate individuals and try to get something changed.

C: Now are you talking, not that they are separable, but in-school or community or a combination of both?

K: Both. And that, sometimes, gets you in a lot of trouble. As an outsider, a lot of people see me as that, and they don’t want to hear your opinions or views. “Well, this is how we do things.” Sometimes how you have done things forever isn’t the right way and it’s time that the things need to be changed for the betterment of the students and the kids. I mean, after all, that’s why they are here. Sometimes it’s an advantage to be an outsider because if you don’t have that connection, “Well, I’m worried about stepping on Billy Bob’s toes because he’s a cousin to my Aunt Dorothy”, this is what it is and you need to see the light. This is where we need to go with something. It offers challenges. Challenges, I learned in sales, leads to more opportunities. In sales it leads to sales. If someone is questioning your product, that’s an opportunity to answer that question and move on and try to close the deal. Same thing with education. If you have a question, take it and direct it to where it’s going to benefit.

C: And I know I tell my students, especially in the Capstone class again, that part of their career is going to be selling their profession…

K: Absolutely.

C: …to the community and I show them the stats between, as a baby boomer half of the community was directly involved in schools because everybody had kids that were school-aged.

K: Right.

C: Now it’s down to like, less than 25% so if you have 75% of the community that doesn’t have direct child involvement in the school you have a sales job because they don’t see the direct application.

K: It’s always nice to remind the baby boomers, the older population that don’t have kids in school right now: “Just remember. These kids are going to be the ones who are going to be paying your Social Security. So you might want them to be the best prepared as possible.”

C: You want them to get a real good job.

K: I always tell my kids, “I want you to do the best in college because when you start making that high dollar money I want to make sure I’m getting my Social Security.” There is an intrinsic value and it’s just a matter of finding it and turning it to them.

C: So do you have anything else to add to for 2? The challenges?

K: Challenges. Just finding your niche in your neighborhood, finding your niche in the community. You’ve got to, any teacher has got to, especially a new teacher who comes into a new area, you’ve got to take some sort of ownership of something, whether a coach or community activities. Be there with the kids. Go to the football games, the volleyball games, the basketball games. Be there. Show the kids that you are there. That goes a long way with both the parents and the students. To show that you care and you are there. There are so many teachers here today that you can’t get them to come to football games. You can’t get them to athletics, band, whatever. They just won’t come. And that’s a shame because there is not a large part of the population that they don’t see the teachers and when they do hear about teachers, instead of seeing them do things out in the community that are positive, they see things that are derogatory. Some sort of event happened and it tarnishes everything. If they don’t have any positive things to compare with the negative, how is that going to look?

C: Right. Exactly. So 3 follows that up: How do you…what methods have you adopted to deal with the stresses of your career? (12:07) How do you keep yourself sane?

K: My best part is just being insane.

C: Maybe an honest answer!

K: Keeps the kids guessing. It keeps them on their toes, keeps them interested in the classroom, but to keep…as I said, you have to stay active in the community, but there are also times when you need to step away and get your head clear. I, unfortunately, have not done that enough. I’m buried too far in and you’ve got to be able to ‘tightrope’ that. You got to be able to spend the time with the community but you need to keep your own personal identity. You have got to be able to go see family. You have got to be able to do different things and ‘get out of Dodge’, as we said in the military. You just got to go out and do your own thing. Have your own hobbies. Go fishing, go hunting, go crochet something. Whatever. Just have your own thing that is you.

C: So it seems…I almost hesitate to call it a hobby, but you obviously like to renovate vehicles. (He had a piston head on his desk that served as a pencil jar. He was an aviation mechanic in the military.) Do you consider that a stress relief or does that cause you more stress?

K: Well, actually, I found something a little different. I actually work part time at Auto Zone and…

C: Oh, really?

K: …and it’s completely disconnected from school and it kind of gives me a little taste of what I used to do, (Both retail and mechanics), without being too obnoxious about it and by not being able to have to worry about a lot of stuff you just have fun with it. Even though it doesn’t pay anything, it’s like 10 dollars an hour, but I have fun with it and I enjoy it and it lets me decompress. I like to hunt and fish too, but, again, like I said, it is completely unrelated.

C: Different.

K: And every once in a while I get a student that drops in that hasn’t been to the classroom in a long time (graduates) and has done a lot of things and it’s good to see the kids come in. They are kind of surprised to see me sitting there and working behind the counter. There are some benefits to doing something just completely unrelated.

C: Oh, I totally agree. So here you are 10, 11 years?

K: Ten years.

C: Ten years into it and so how are you motivated to best serve your students? What keeps the fire burning?

K: More training. (I thought more learning and training did the same for me: Emporia State National Science Foundation Summer Program, Valley Forge Freedoms Foundation, NEH at William and Mary and Holy Cross, Master’s degree, doctorate and many conferences and PD). I just picked up my certification for [SAFE-T](http://ed.sc.gov/educators/educator-effectiveness/adept-evaluation-system-2006/evaluating-educators/), which is teacher evaluation and originally, the reason I did it wasn’t the fact that I wanted to be a teacher evaluator. That wasn’t the intention. The intention was to, after I looked at what was involved with it, was to kind to refresh myself on why I was here and look at a new picture. A new picture of education. Go back over what we should be doing in the classroom and remind myself of things I need to change because one of the worst things I think a teacher can do is become too comfortable in the classroom. It’s good to be comfortable in the classroom but you need to keep evolving in the classroom. You have got to change things and trying new things. Yeah, you are going to fail. You are going to make mistakes. That’s part of life, but without that variety and the change you are going to get stale. You know just stand there for 20 years and read the same Power Point over. That’s pointless. You are not getting any better and you are basically becoming apathetic so that’s…

C: We all had those teachers who used the same yellowed notes year after year.

K: Yeah.

C: And sometimes some of my colleagues in the two different schools I taught in, I would say to them, “I am really looking forward to being evaluated.” And they would say, “Well, why?” And I would say, “Because you always need that outside look every once in a while and everybody needs a kick in the pants every once in a while too.”

K: Sure. Absolutely. Things like that, new training, new aspects. Go out and do some workshops. Go out and see what other people are doing. If you have the option, go out and visit a new teacher in his classroom because they are coming out and they are ‘loaded for bear’ and they are still excited and that transfers. Seeing a new teacher…he may be doing something that is completely opposite of what you are doing that you might be able to pick up. You know you used to say, “Steal the best. Use what you can.” Go out and see what he’s got or what she’s got. What she’s doing that’s different and you might find out, “Hey, the students are engaged! Let’s try something like that.”

C: Yeah. Right. Question #5 leads right into that based on what you just said: What changes, if any, have occurred in the strategies and methods you use in your classroom?

K: I try to add things. There are certain things that I have started to like. The Government in the news, Economics in the news. Getting the kids up in front (of the class). One of the things that I find about teenagers they are so self-conscious about speaking in front of each other and we all know that when you get to college or even in the real world, they have to talk in front of their peers or other people and they have got to get out of that. Once they are in college they don’t have time to discover it’s not a big deal. (18:06) I had the advantage of standing in front of CEOs and other folks doing presentations for years and even when I first started college I was still a little nervous but I worked that out but having the kids being able to speak in front of people is a great asset. That’s one of the reasons I have them do it. That and let them use their technology to find out things. It pushes them more towards starting to use stuff for other than playing Nintendo or some sort of app than they can download on their phone. The more that I can change, it’s just like the quizzes that I am starting to rewrite for U.S. History. Get out of the box because after looking at what the textbook company is doing, it’s not what I want. The other U.S. History teacher, he started using those (the quizzes that came with the textbook materials) because they were readily available and, honestly, easy. We just started with a whole new U.S. History program and that was a short cut that we ran for a while until we could get everything else worked out. As we got the other things worked out, now we working on the quizzes. Now I am going to go back and re-work the tests and balance back and forth and keep smoothing it out but keep changing the lessons as we can to improve them and, sometimes, if we make mistakes we will back up and try something else. With the state testing and the state’s previous history and it weights in with our job performance it creates all kinds of issues.

C: How much of the…well, I will get into that in a further question, too, but to front that, how much of your evaluation is tied to your students’ scores on the EOC (South Carolina’s state tests)?

K: I’m thinking close to 40%.

C: 40%.

K: 40%, but I could be wrong. (<http://bhs.lancastercsd.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_3127863/File/SLO%20PDF%20file%20090814.pdf>) (As of 2015 it was 30%.) It’s somewhere between 25 and 40. But it is significant.

C: It has varied so far with the people I have interviewed from 30 and 50. And when someone said, “50”, I went, “Whoa!”

K: Yeah. It’s up there. We also have administrative evaluations and other things. The SLO (South Carolina Learning Objectives) program, which sounds like it is getting pretty universal across the board, throughout different states. It was nice while I was writing my first SLO that a lot of different states are doing that. Little different formats but for the most part the same thing.

C: Do you think, I know you have always been invested in technology, career-wise and otherwise, do you think that has prompted some of your notions about not being stagnant because you know technology changes happens?

K: Right. And technology is a ‘must have’ in the classroom. Obviously that is one of the ‘Duh’ statements in the world. We have got to do it. The kids already now live and breath it. Every kid, student you have in the classroom, most likely has some sort of Smartphone. Some variation of it. They are using it for just about every type of social media that’s available so why not tie it to the classroom? “We need the computers. Get the Chromebooks out.” But, again, that is another monetary issue we also have to handle too. We have to got to have technology because…one thing I that have a problem with is my generation is not going to be able to adapt very well to this level of multi-tasking that they are capable of. I still don’t understand how they can have four people talking at once and completely understand each other, but they manage to do it. I mean I can’t do it. But, like I said, you’ve seen it. They just all start talking and somehow they manage to get their point across. Their generation is able to handle more input than my generation. I need to focus on one thing at a time. But yet they seem to do a lot more than that, and with that I think is one of the reasons that we have kids become bored with class because they don’t have enough stimulus. They aren’t getting what they are used to. So one thing coming at them at a time, they might be having three or four things so you have got to use technology in the classroom, Smartboards, the videos, if that thing would work right (his Smartboard was not functioning correctly), the games or whatever that they could interact with it, those are all very important.

C: Evaluation question: What types of evaluations, both informal and formal, are used to assess your classroom teaching and how are these evaluations used to better your teaching? And you mentioned, and I can edit this out if you want me to, but you mentioned that one of your evaluations was on a sticky note at one point.

K: I don’t get a lot of feedback on evaluations. Actually…

C: How often are you evaluated?

K: That’s a good question.

C: That’s why I asked it.

K: I don’t know.

C: Really?

K: I haven’t seen an evaluation, a written evaluation only in 8 years.

C: Holy cow! (24:03) Wow!

K: So, again, like I said, that’s a good question. I don’t know. The principal, the assistant principal comes to the classroom and makes some notes and goes, and I have never seen any of those notes. Evaluations seem to change on different teachers so I don’t know. Some teachers are seen more often than others. I think it goes back to “the squeaky wheel gets the grease” scenario. The ones that they are having issues with… I know there is a couple of teachers, I know there are several that are evaluated weekly. People who come in and observe, not evaluations. Evaluations are a bad term. They are observed weekly. I think I saw an assistant principal in the classroom…I can’t remember seeing the principal at all this year…assistant principal in the classroom maybe twice this year.

C: For the whole class period?

K: Five minutes.

C: Five minutes.

K: Five or ten minutes.

C: Now, pretty much in Michigan they are doing “drop ins” and people told me like 10 or 15 minutes and then what happens after that is anything from they hand back a rubric that is check marked and that’s it to a rubric with checkmarks and some sentences about what made…why they made the checks they did to a sit down for a class period, “And, ok, this is what I saw and let’s talk about it.” So the spectrum on that has been huge within this.

K: I’m on one end of it, apparently.

C: Yeah. You are. That’s the first I have heard that, although I will be honest with you. I went about 6 or 8 years in Kansas without being observed and it was that “squeaky wheel thing” and I finally asked my principal, I said, “I can’t remember the last time I was evaluated.” And he said, “I can’t either.” And I said, “Shouldn’t you have to do that?” And he said, “Why? We know you are a good teacher. You have good classroom management skills. You don’t send kids to the office. Their grades are good. They are obviously learning. Why waste my time when I could be with somebody else that needs it.” I said, “Well, ok. If you could find the time some time just come into my classroom because I would like an outside perspective of what is going on.” He was surprised. I guess that is not any different. Mentoring: What types of mentoring were provided for you and how would you characterize the results of the mentoring that was provided for you?

K: With my student teaching or?

C: No. When you came down here.

K: Oh, boy! Mentoring… Officially I was assigned a mentor-teacher. She came by occasionally. We went through an [Adept Program](https://ed.sc.gov/scdoe/assets/file/programs-services/50/documents/IMGuidelines.pdf), which is, basically, where you go from your provisional license, is what they call it in Michigan. I forget what they call a provisional license in South Carolina but you go from that to Professional and you have to go through the ADEPT Program and basically they would go through classroom observations and you would talk with a mentor and also had classes and stuff with other first year teachers and second…it was a two year process. As for mentor, very limited. I spent more time talking with another history teacher the first year and after that I had gone onto another school. Actually he was transferred to this school and I caught up to him a few years later when I was transferred here. Other than that, like I say, was pretty limited. Basically I was thrown in. I walked into my first classroom and not even a teacher’s chair. No textbooks. They forgot to order them, so I grabbed an 11th grade Geography book and started teaching World History and I went with that for a while until they got our textbooks.

C: Wow!

K: It was an interesting start because, as you already know, the first two years was different.

C: Make for a heck of a story.

K: Yeah. There was always something interesting going on. I’ve made some “doozies”. Sometimes I have gotten aggravated. I’ve gotten frustrated. Sometimes having Don, (Don was dying of cancer when I was there in October of 2015) the other (history) teacher, was instrumental in helping me keep my sanity my first year. Walking in and teaching 7th graders was a challenge for anybody, and especially for a first year teacher developing your classroom management. I fell back on my military training. I came to deal in the classroom. I set my lines (for behavior expectations) and used what I learned at GVSU and provided with my military (training) and I was the drill sergeant of the classroom (30:17) and it worked out. A lot of parents appreciated it and, basically, one thing I learned that year is you have to call them on something you better not fluff because if you say you are going to call Momma, you are going to call Daddy, you better pick the phone up and call Mom and Dad because otherwise anything else you say is meaningless. It has no effect. If you set that line in the classroom and you do your classroom management, you’ve got to hold to it for better or worse because otherwise the whole house of cards will collapse.

C: Really quickly.

K: One of the mistakes that, the old thing, and I hate to say this, but “Don’t smile until Christmas” sometimes, depending on situations, that applies. You have got to hold it together and my first two years at Calhoun Falls were nowhere near being textbook, to say the least. But it helped me learn to balance things a lot better and as I moved on to Dixie High School and into a much different situation, still almost no administrative support there, whatsoever, things have been, like I said, you learn to adapt, adjust and if you don’t you are going to drive yourself crazy.

C: I would like to help people avoid that as much as possible. The crazy part.

K: The biggest thing is when you come into the classroom, don’t take things personally. The kids say things; they are going to deliberately say things to push your buttons and everybody knows that so if they find out where your weak spot is they are going to dig in.

C: Blood in the water.

K: Yeah. Big time.

C: Have you pursued continuing education, and it sounds like you have…

K: Yes.

C: …either in the form of a graduate program or professional development and how has this education influenced your success in the classroom?

K: I wish I was farther along on my Master’s. A bunch of personal things have gone on and family members have kept me out of that. Continuing education is a must. If you are not going to do it, you need to re-think because that is what you are teaching to begin with, is continuing education. So you need to practice what you preach.

C: How many hours or seatwork or whatever do you have to have to maintain your certification?

K: They want 60 points or at least a couple of Master’s classes every time you certify. First renewal they want one, minimum and second one they want two.

C: Ok.

K: But, again, like I said, take the opportunity to go and do some the workshops and those are good for clearing up the head up too. Getting out and getting another view of things when you are able and not only learning different techniques but just to refresh yourself.

C: Now, how is that offered here? Is it just through the county or is there some other agency that does professional development?

K: The school district does a lot of professional development in-house, but, again, and that’s good, but again, it is good to get out and do stuff, get out…anything here is out of town anyway, but get away from it and step back and have a look at the picture better never hurts.

C: No.

K: That’s important to do some professional development that is away and it also helps you with networking with other schools and maybe if you are a coach, making some introductions and stuff like that so you know how you are talking to face to face. It seems that Social Studies accumulates numerous coaches.

C: Guilty as charged. So where have you gone outside the district to pick up professional development?

K: I’ve gone to Columbia a couple of times; classroom management stuff. We’ve done some online classes for suicide prevention is the term…yeah, those are wonderful. (He meant sad or depressing.) Depressing. But some of the stuff is, but, again, like I said, it needs to be done.

C: Right.

K: All those little things. A lot of things like suicide prevention, there’s a lot of stuff that I didn’t have my “radar” set for, that it has opened my eyes to that. The Shelby High School thing…I would have had no clue. (Graffiti on a middle school wall that turned out to be a terroristic threat). Not at all. You can’t see everything coming. Just be able to keep that (all the background knowledge you need to teach) refreshed. And then going into learning about the new tech things, the new technologies. There is always something new and better, whether it is or not, that’s another story, but it may pop an idea on something. “This little piece works for me. I can pull that in.” You know. And different and adapt.

C: Here you go: “Pearls of Wisdom” question. (36:14) What would you tell current students to make sure they know before they start teaching? In other words, what do you wish you knew before you left GVSU to start your career? And I do share these “Pearls” with my classes so…

K: Oh, that’s a toughy.

C: “I only wish I knew…”

K: Boy! There’s actually two ways you can look at that. Knowledge has good and bad aspects for your growth. Sometimes ignorance is bliss. You go into certain areas and you really know it. When you go into teaching it’s better not to know and learn it for yourself because if you rely on somebody to tell you or wherever you get your information from, that’s always not going to be the full picture, and sometimes learning on your own is so important. The other thing is, and, again, I hate to keep going back to clichés but sometimes it’s better to ask for forgiveness than permission. You have to learn and, like I said, always cover any type of bases with students. Today with everything that gets brought to the head, highlight the newsreels, you know, with teacher and student interactions, you have got to be covered. You can’t even…you have got to watch it too. And we’re fortunate, I don’t think it’s, knock on wood, a problem here. It just makes me nervous as all get out when I have a student alone in my classroom. The doors are open. You have got to make sure. Coaching female students is the same thing. It’s, you have got to make sure you have coverage. You’ve got to make sure you understand that they may be the best student in the world but it’s amazing the Jekyll and Hyde act that some of these kids can do. So your opinion may make them be the greatest kid in the world and all of a sudden (he snaps his fingers to symbolize a student snapping and becoming a completely different person than you thought he or she was.) You have got to watch what you say. I don’t know if it was you or another professor who said, “If you can’t say it to your grandma, don’t say it in the classroom.” (I didn’t say that, as far as I can remember.)

C: And I always tell people too, “If you are not comfortable with anybody walking through that door, whether it’s a parent or an administrator or whatever, or just somebody from the community, if that makes you feel uncomfortable because of what you teaching then you probably need to re-think what you are teaching or how you are teaching it. If you can’t answer, ‘Why am I doing this the way I am doing it, then why am I doing it?’” That’s another thing and I always question myself about I could come into my classes and tell them 28 years of bad stories about stuff that I saw happen but I don’t want to do that. I’d rather…I still want them to be…I want them to at least feel a little bit, “I can change the world” versus this is all the weight of all the responsibilities on your shoulders and all the things you could potentially see. I don’t want to do that to anybody. At the same time I want them to be open-eyed about what they are getting into and that’s part of the purpose of this is to get everybody else’s take on that. (How to be realistic about teaching without being pessimistic. Being realistic but with hope and a little idealism.)

K: In covering, basically what we called in the military CYA (covering your ass), that’s life. That is everywhere. That isn’t just in education. Educators, for better or worse, and I think for better, we’re held at a higher standard than anybody else to how our behavior is and everything else and that’s to be expected. A teacher, especially in small communities, you don’t go out and get rip roaring drunk and stumbling around the place. You have to maintain an aura of professionalism. You have got to do that because you have to keep in mind that you may be the only positive adult that these kids deal with….influence…that does do that. Otherwise all they see is people falling down drunk or high or doing things that they are not supposed to. That’s just part of it. That’s part of the job.

C: Chris Manick up in Oscoda who is an elementary school technology teacher, he said on the days he doesn’t feel particularly good one of the things that keeps him going to school is he knows there are kids coming off that bus in the morning that if they don’t see him their day is starting off bad. That they need that contact with those positive role models to be able to make it through the day. That’s a burden but at the same time it’s fulfilling to know, I think, to know that people depend on you to be there and be who you are. I think, too, some of my colleagues in the past said, “I will never live in the district that I teach in.” And I said, “Well, why?” I just never understood why they…it was a little bit, “My personal life, I don’t want to live in a fish bowl” (42:39) but at the same time if you isolate yourself from which you teach you lose out on so much. I looked forward to bumping into parents at the grocery store, especially the ones who avoided me.

K: The ones you needed to see that don’t show up (to parent teacher conferences).

C: I had some great parent teacher conferences in the check out line. “You can’t get out. My cart is behind you.”

K: Absolutely. Been there. Done that. Whether it be in a grocery store or up in Greenwood (SC) at the Walmart. “How’s your homework coming? Uhh… He’s got homework? Yeah. You didn’t sign that progress report I sent home? What progress report? Ohhh.” And then an interesting series of questions begin. The parents, for the most part, 95-99%, are supportive of teachers and they will, around here, we do really well with the parents. Then you get the small number who could care less what their kids are getting into and then you have the ones that are more dangerous and those are, “My kid can do no wrong” parents and you are going to run into those. That’s part of it and the only thing you can do is, parents who can do no wrong, you make sure you have an administrator sitting in meetings with you because that way you don’t have to tell them (the administrators) what they said. They have heard it first. So that way it’s, “Ok, this really is happening. Well, ok, I’ll deal with it.” Let them (the administrators) do their job. That’s what they are there for.

C: That’s what they are paid the big bucks for.

K: That’s what they are paid big bucks so when ‘Johnny’ can do no wrong, Momma shows up and the administrator has already been in on it…he’s…let them deflect it. Let them handle it. You’re not going to…you can’t fix everything, but you can do your best.

C: Right. The last question is: Is there any information you would like to add about your teaching career I didn’t cover in the questions? Any other “Pearls” or anything else you think I should have asked but I didn’t?

K: Well, this is my fourth profession. I worked as a auto mechanic from 12 to 18 years old. I have been paying into Social Security since 1974.

C: You and me both Kyle. (Actually I have been paying into Social Security since 1967.)

K: Avionics mechanic in the military and then computers and cash registers for over 20 years and I have got to say that this is my favorite job. I love it.

C: Great to hear.

K: It’s the only way to put it.

C: Wow!

K: You either going to love teaching or you get out of it. There’s no reason making yourself miserable. There’s no reason ruining kids’ lives. If you love it, you are going to love it. Period.

C: Thanks Kyle.