**Cari Diehl**

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**ELA 4, 5, 7, 8,**

**Wednesday, August 16, 2017**

**What Core 8-2 Students Need to Know about Mrs. Diehl**

I believe that you can achieve anything with perseverance and hard work. No task, learning or talent is unreachable as long as you believe in yourself and understand the hard work you have to put into your dream to achieve it. On the flip side of this, I also believe that one of the best teachers in life is failure. Failure at a task or an idea is never a bad thing—it is just one way you learn what didn’t work so that you can reevaluate your goals and try again. In fact, the growth mindset we are going to focus on this year defines this idea as *failing forward*—using failure to push ourselves and our dreams, goals, and hopes forward. It’s the continued perseverance in reaching our ideals that helps us succeed.

But, I am obviously more than my belief in failing to succeed. One important aspect about my life you should know is that I do have a life outside of teaching. Teaching is a passion, yes, but I do have several other passions: reading (duh) and (yep) writing. I also like to do challenging crossword puzzles, go for solitary runs, hike when I can find the time, camp (22 National Parks and counting!), travel, zip along on my road bike and play really frustrating rounds of golf. My greatest passion, however, is my family. I have a husband, Alan, and two sons: Sean (who is a sophomore in college) and Brandon (who is a freshman in college). Although they are two very independent young men who work, play and study on their own schedule, at times my priority is to be Mom. This means that if they require help, guidance (or even just want to go to a movie and hangout with me—wishful thinking!) I will not get my grading homework done. However, 95% of the time you will find I am very good at doing my homework. I hope you are too. ☺

Please also know that I can be somewhat sarcastic and quite goofy—I generally have a very dry sense of humor and the ability to laugh at my very frequent mistakes. I may also joke that I became a teacher to torture you (and very often you will feel tortured), but I really do want to see you succeed. I am here to help you succeed—as a writer, as a reader and as a responsible citizen of your community. Yet success doesn’t have to be so serious every day. I do hope for some laughs along the way…even if they are at my expense.

All joking and fun aside, don’t let this side fool you: I have high expectations. I will continuously let you know what your strengths are, but at the same time I will be firm in how I expect you to grow as a writer and a reader. We will build confidence and skills together, but I won’t let you slack. I love my job and I take it seriously—kids really are the future and I want you to be as successful at writing as you are at anything you for which you have a passion. One of my favorite activities (well, it’s more of a sport) is holding you accountable. I am incredibly consistent and vocal in my expectations and you will probably start working just to shut me up.

(over)

Now for some tips on how to find success this year:

Come to class prepared every day. Try not to tell me you didn’t do your homework. I work hard for you; I expect you to work hard for me. Read, read, and read some more. Reading is the best exercise for your writer’s brain—even if it’s just bumper stickers as you’re riding around town, the posters on my wall because you’re not focusing on your work, or a magazine about whatever you are passionate about (even if it’s Justin Bieber—still). I don’t care—just do it. Reading is how all of us discover new ideas and worlds. It’s part of communication—and communication is what this class is all about.

Don’t slack off in science, math and social studies —Mr. Loucks, Mrs. DeHart and Mrs. Scott are also your writing and reading teachers. They just get to teach those subjects within different boundaries than I do. In fact, look at it this way—they have the boundaries, I don’t. As an English teacher, I have an unlimited supply of writing and reading models to choose from—and I like to choose as many as I can.

Understand that the poster on my wall that reads “In this class we don’t do easy—we make easy happen through hard work and learning” reflects one of my philosophies about learning. We learn through a little bit of struggle—if something is easy, that only means we already have mastered it. You are beginning writers and readers because you have only been practicing those arts for a few years now. Thus, to me, learning is an easy formula: Through hard work and lots of practice, you will become a better reader and writer. Simple, but true. (And this formula also reflects the other quote at the front of the room: “Nothing will work unless you do.”)

Most of all—enjoy your eighth grade year. Yes, I have lots learning opportunities planned for you. But I also want you to have a little fun and learn more about yourself. Just remember I am here for you—I care about kids and, starting today, I especially care about you.