



Drew Robinson 163
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My name is Drew Robinson. I am a School Psychologist in the Brentwood School District. I've been in this District for thirty years. I've worked at all levels starting at 'Early Intervention' for about nine years; I served at the Middle School level for about eleven years and the last ten years I've been at the High School. "Why had I decided to retire at this particular time?" Drew responded by saying – "That's probably the toughest question to answer, because I'm still enjoying every single day that I come here". "But that's when I preferred to go out, still enjoying being here and not when I was tired and unable to do other things that I'm looking forward to doing in post-retirement." I asked Drew why he had stayed in Brentwood and chosen not to go elsewhere at any point during his tenure. He replied by telling us that he felt there was such a great need in the district for not only Psychologists but for as many caring and helping people as possible – and he said he knows because he has many close relatives who have careers in education who have confirmed for him that this is the only place for him.

He came to Brentwood in 1979. When I asked if he could identify the one year out of all his years in the district that he found to have been the most difficult, without hesitation he said he could. It was his second year at Brentwood High School; the 1996-97 school year, and the reason it was the worst year was because it was only his second year at the high school, and that year they were flooded with crisis interventions. There were forty-two suicide interventions in that one year, and there was only one person, himself, to cover both buildings at that point. He had to cover Sonderling and Ross Building, and he found that to be close to impossible.

When invited to name the best or most satisfying year out of all his years in the district, he said that was tough to answer, because most of the rest he claimed to be pretty good. They were all pretty good. This year, his final year, in particular had been very good. The hard part of his final year is that the kids and the teaching colleagues he worked with were all very upset that he was leaving. As much as he is ready to move on, they are not similarly ready to see him move on. What were the greatest changes that he has seen taken place over his years in Brentwood, Probably the laws passed by the New York State Legislature and Congress. "No Child Left Behind" has made it extremely difficult. Everyone is working very hard and doing a lot more work. It almost seems that we're all about paper work and making sure the letter of the law is being followed at the expense of children and not accomplishing the one-on-one work so desperately required by kids.

Looking to the future of education I only see one thing that makes me feel anything but hopeful about the direction in which we're headed. Schools have got to be smaller. Size is the issue. Everything is too big. Everything has become less personal. Smaller classes in smaller buildings in more intimate settings would help. I honestly don't know if we'll ever see that happen.

My job is difficult every day, but it's also rewarding every day. The single greatest difficulty I face in my job is once again found in the size, the abundance – the amount of work expected to be done on a daily basis. Inevitably, I need more than a six and a quarter hour day in which to do my job justice. The most satisfying part for me is seeing my students who over the years have succeeded and grown into becoming cops, pharmacists, and I've been invited to all their weddings, I've been god-father to some of their kids, and just seeing the future of some of these young people and the achievements they've been capable of has made me feel satisfied and proud of them for what they have accomplished.

As I've already said, I'd like to see two things – smaller classes, smaller schools and more services. I know that's money and that's economics, but when I was the service provider in one school, I was one Psychologist for two buildings, and it just wasn't practical, and then we became one for each, and it was just barely workable. Now because we have approximately two thousand kids in each building and we're servicing a good many of them. Having more staff would really be the answer, but again I'm being realistic, because I've worked under those conditions without complaining, because I know what's real and what's fantasy.

How would Drew like to be remembered by those colleagues with whom he worked side by side during his years in Brentwood? Here he was moved to quote what his own father had once advised him. His father was a butcher who worked long, hard hours for fifty years. He advised his son to -"Always give a day's work."

Asked to provide an answer to the last question Drew admitted to both having anticipated the question and his own answer to it. "Be yourself", he said. "Don't try to do what someone else does or copy someone else's kind of performance. You can always get information from people to learn, especially as a psychologist. If you're not being yourself, the kids will pick it up. They will see the fakeness in it, the phoniness in it. You have to be yourself, and then you'll be very successful."

"Everything hangs on one's thinking. Seneca
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