

Everett

When I quit at Central Kitsap I had no idea when I was looking for a new job that it was so very difficult to be hired. When I got the job in Central Kitsap hundreds of people were not being hired because it was a time that there were more teachers than positions. At that time, only twenty percent of potential teachers were getting jobs. The competition was exceptionally large because of Viet Nam and the fact that male teachers were excused from being a soldier if they had a teaching position. I was lucky to be hired in Central Kitsap and with the same kinds of hiring problems when I was hired by Everett the third week of school I felt lucky again.

I worked there for a year and a half in the high school and then I was transferred to the middle school. They put me in sixth grade and assigned me to teach items I was not prepared to teach. They adjusted the schedule so that it was changed and another teacher, Grace Lundstedt, later Everett Education Association President, revised her schedule for me. She was wonderful. My assignment was from February to June. I learned more in that half year about teaching than all the other assignments I had over the course of my career and what we should do for all our students. I got two sections of kids one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The morning group was loaded with failures. They expected that most of them would get D's or F's. I decided I couldn't accept that so I tried to find out why it was happening.

The morning section of children was very difficult. They were exceptionally poorly behaved, they all came from the poor family homes, they wouldn't do homework, and they wouldn't listen to each other or to me. I had been sick each morning because it was as scary to me as I tried to travel to get to work with them. One day one of the sixth graders said you'll see it. "We have been working hard to get all the teachers who come to us to leave and we always win. You are next," she said. That girl made me wonder so I got involved with the counselor and the administrator about these students. It turned out that the administration kept a class of students together that became the bad group. The elementary school they came from had kept them together, thought they were failures, and labeled them a half grade instead of a full grade class. They didn't feel that they worked very hard and they didn't learn. When they came to sixth grade at the middle school the school kept them together so they would not influence others. I decided I wasn't going to stand for that.

One of the students tried to create a fire in the class by putting paper in the heat grater and the Vice Principal said the student was sitting out of class one day and would be back in class the next day. The damage forced the class to be in the cafeteria the next two days while they repaired the classroom. The firefighters gave a presentation to the students I had in the class. The students were non-responsive and the fire fighters criticized my management problems. I moved the kids into groups in the class. I told them they would be evaluated as a group and that if they didn't help each other they wouldn't pass. That would mean they would be in this school next year and

I would be their teacher again. I stopped their discipline issues because I told them that if they weren't nice to each other they could sit in the office every day during this class. That meant sitting in the office three periods a day.

We had a Vice-Principal and instead of being firm and providing experiences for misbehaving students, he became their pal. He liked to play with the student so the student could misbehave and then was rewarded for behavior that just got worse. I was young, twenty-seven, but I told the Assistant Principal that if he didn't support me in managing the students and teaching them then he could come into my class every day and play with those students who were unfocused. I said I would go to the Superintendent to discuss the Vice Principal discipline methods if he wanted to. He didn't want that and so the one student, who was the very worst in terms of discipline, wound up going to the V.P.'s office every day. After about a week with him out of the class, I saw the student at lunch. He wanted to know if he could come back. I told him he could but only if he followed the rules I've set up for the class that all the other student's do. He came back, began to focus, did work, and had fundamentally moved towards success. That class improved every day. At the end of the year, that class put together a project of the country and schools in South America. It was outstanding and I had many conversations with parents to support the students. Their project was better than any other class because they worked as a team and they focused on their individual work and contributions.

What I learned was that teachers must see children as individuals. Grouping those gives them practice working with others and working with each of them as an individual gives them the opportunity to focus on themselves. On the project, each student picked the work he or she would like to do. One of them drew, another did the outline, and yet another did a country's menu. Each student had to study the South American countries and pick one to pursue. I worked very closely with each one of them so that depending on where they needed guidance, support, and instruction they were provided. Other teachers at that school were amazed that I had been able to manage that class and amazed at the quality they produced. I had asked the principal if I could move into eighth grade or I would have to look for a job in another district. He said that if I managed the class I was in that had achieved driving out six teachers then he would put me where I wanted to be. As it turned out, he assigned me to eighth grade for the next year.

Educations Striking

When I was in Everett, I got involved with the teachers in what we did for students and what the district did for them. This led to striking in the district. I served as a picket leader in the first strike, two years later, we had another strike, and I served as the north picket leader. We fought the district because they created classes not treating kids as individuals and did not support teachers. I decided to leave that district and not get into those kinds of fights. Serving the kids was the most important thing we could do and spending so much energy against the school district stood in the way against what kids needed. We won against the district and in one of the strikes the court found for teachers so teachers won thirty-seven of thirty-nine issues as I remember. I learned at that time that I never wanted to work in a place like that again. I

understand that the Everett School District has gotten tremendously better since the seventies. I know Carol Stolz who I worked with in Lake Washington School District during the 80's. I hadn't talked to her since 2001 when I held a large dinner for friends and people I had worked with. Currently she is the Personnel Director in Everett for all classified employees. She is a wonderful person and Everett is lucky they have her.

Dr. Pamela Katims Steele, my friend and counselor in Everett, was one of those who I led into the strike at Everett High School. She left Everett as did I and we went separate ways. She worked in other districts. She applied for Communications Director in the Northshore School District. Pamela and I connected and I was thrilled to recommend her to the district where I had worked. They were smart and hired her. She is so capable when it comes to communicating, gifted. I didn't know we would reconnect at the hospital where I had almost died. She had been the public relationship representative for the surgeon, Dr. Sekhar, who saved my life. She came to see me in the hospital when I had the brain aneurism at Harborview and leukemia at Everett Providence. We have been close ever since and she was the one who supported me and continues to do so.

Title IX

When I was in Everett, 1974-79, in addition to the strikes, there were other issues to address. I was on a committee to deal with Title IX. I am pleased with how that was turning out. Finally, we in education were starting to give girls authentic athletics and science and math emphasis. Everywhere girls for the most part watched the boys in the "real" athletics and were excluded from math and science. Girls were allowed to be involved in after school activities so there were some physical options. However, to get that sense of girls being able to be competitive track was the main and only choice. Girls liked basketball, baseball, volleyball, tennis, football, but girls had no support to participate and there were no teams for them. Of course, there is to this day no football for girls but the trade off under the Title IX struggle volleyball was a sport provided so girls would be able to belong to a team. I still giggle when I remember girl's basketball at that time. If you were a girl playing basketball, you could only bounce the ball twice and then you had to throw it or lose it to the other side. You couldn't cross the middle line and play the entire court. The games that were only for recreation were also designed so that students couldn't even run the entire court. The message was that girls couldn't run like boys. When we look at math and science girls have been able to join boys and pursue what they are interested in and gifted at pursuing. Title IX, is a United States law enacted on June 23, 1972 that states, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."