

Missouri Career Mentor video script



Curt Yaeger

High School Teacher and Coach
Jefferson City High school

My name is Curt Yaeger, and I am a high school mathematics teacher and the varsity girls volleyball coach. When I was in high school, my favorite subject was mathematics, and I played basketball and ran track and thought I wanted to do some coaching. So I went to college and got a degree in mathematics and a minor in coaching and have coached basketball, volleyball, baseball. I coached the high school level for the most part. Right now I am teaching calculus and trigonometry, but have taught algebra I, geometry, algebra II, basically about any math class that the high school offers - I have taught it.

Characteristics

Skills that you need to be successful as a teacher, in my opinion, would probably include being well organized so you're ready for every day. You have to be well prepared so that when the kids come into your room you have to have your material ready to go for each day. You have to be prepared to change your plan if you need to, because every day is not going to be the same, and you may have something lined up that you think is going to work perfectly, and because of a certain situation you may have to change that, so being able to change on the run is a good thing. But most importantly, I think you have to be yourself in the classroom. If you are going to be a certain way, then you need to be that way every day in the classroom and not change from day to day. So, basically be yourself every day so the kids understand exactly who you are.

Joys & Challenges

I think one of the most enjoyable things about teaching is watching people grow. Watching kids learn and grow and develop. You know you start the year with maybe a person who is not well-versed in mathematics – or maybe they don't even like mathematics – but as you show them things and they start understanding things, they kinda get the idea they are okay at math and then they can do well. The other thing is watching them mature from one year to another. You know, as a volleyball coach, for one thing, I get to see kids come in as freshmen and sometimes I get to see them go all the way through their senior year in volleyball, as well as having them in class sometimes. And just watching that maturity level, teaching them things, and watching them after they graduate go on being very successful is very rewarding as a teacher.

Early Influence

Probably the reason that I chose teaching was when I was in high school I had a math teacher that I really liked and admired. I had him as freshman in a freshman-level math class and had him again a couple of times and had him again for my senior level math class and always looked up to him – admired what he did and what he taught to us. And at the same time I had a really good varsity basketball coach when I was playing basketball. He taught me a lot of life lessons, as well as lessons about basketball. So

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I think because of those two gentlemen, they kinda steered me in the path that I took. I kinda wanted to emulate what I did after them. What I do in my room as a math teacher is a lot of the same things that my high school math teacher did when I was in his class. And as a coach, I think I have modeled a lot of the things that I do after the coach that I had in high school.

High School Classes

The classes that I had in high school – especially math-related – I use every day because that is what I am teaching my students right now. If you are going to be an English teacher, obviously you need to take lots of English classes; if you are going to be a social studies teacher, take history and social studies. But if you plan on doing any career math-related – it doesn't have to be teaching necessarily, you know there are lots of other occupations that are math-related. Maybe you won't use everything you learn in high school mathematically, but there's lots of things you use on a daily basis. If you have any intentions of being a math teacher, you need to take all the math you can.

I think the English classes that I took in high school helped prepare me for communicating with other people. You have to communicate with your students in writing sometimes, not just verbally. You have to communicate with parents, so being able to communicate effectively with all kinds of people is a very important skill, and that's not only true in teaching, that's a daily skill that you have to do. So I think that taking a lot of English and communications or speech-type classes would be very important.

In Retrospect

I think that if I had to do anything differently when I was in high school I think I would have probably read more. I was never a big reader. I always wanted to get outside and do something, but I think as far as knowledge of different subject matter, I think reading is very important. I think it will also help you with your spelling and your communication skills. So I think that if there were one thing I would have done differently I would have read more – and maybe, probably, emphasize a little bit more on my writing skills when I was in high school.

Memorable Moment

I had a student, maybe 10 years ago, who wrote an article about me as a matter of fact. They wrote an article and mentioned in the article that although teachers don't make that much money sometimes, they change lives in a lot of ways. You know, maybe we don't have the biggest house in town, maybe we don't have the fanciest car, but we come in most of the time with a smile on our face... and he wrote a whole article for one of his English teachers, as a matter of fact, explaining why he enjoyed coming to my class. And by knowing that he enjoyed coming to my class, it just makes what I do worthwhile. At the same time, one of the things I am most proud of - as a volleyball coach or coach of any sport in general – is I am always very proud of my athletes and their academic progress. This year, for example, I had a varsity volleyball team that had a GPA of over 4.0 at the high school level. That's the whole team combined. And watching those kids graduate and move on to college and come back and share with me what they have learned and what they learned from me and how successful they are now, just makes it all worthwhile.