

Dear Blue Oak Community,

As of late, I have been thinking about what it means to be successful. Society often measures success by material possessions, salaries paid, and degrees earned. In schools, success is typified by high grades, strong test scores, and awards and recognition. In the rush to achieve we can lose the whole child, paying attention to a two dimensional view of success. A school I know has the following code of behavior: take care of yourself, take care of each other, and take care of this place. To be successful, a student must develop compassion and responsibility, wisdom and excellence.

At Blue Oak, we focus on the possibilities in every child, helping each to reach new horizons, growing toward the future. We value the inherent social and intellectual value all children carry within, the questions and smiles they will contribute. By creating safe classrooms in which students find their voices and learn how to learn, we foster deep thinkers and courageous doers. As Amy Valens states in the movie *August to June*, “good teachers welcome the whole child at the classroom door,” including curiosity, sorrow, hunger, creativity, friendship, inquiry, and a desire to be known and appreciated.

A friend of mine recently shared a poem with me that speaks to what we expect of our children.

Do not ask your children  
to strive for extraordinary lives.  
Such striving may seem admirable  
but it is the way of foolishness.  
Help them instead to find the wonder  
and the marvel of an ordinary life.  
Show them the joy of tasting  
tomatoes, apples and pears.  
Show them how to cry  
when pets and people die.  
Show them the infinite pleasure  
in the touch of a hand.  
And make the ordinary come alive for them.  
The extraordinary will take care of itself.

William Martin, *The Parent's Tao Te Ching:  
Ancient Advice for Modern Parents*

In the rush toward success, to achieve the extraordinary, we can unintentionally devalue the day-to-day events and actions of our lives. For it is in the ordinary that we lead our lives and loves, finding meaning, and impacting the world around us. Success lies not in reaching the destination, but in learning from the journey. Thank you for fostering the journey on which Blue Oak students become life-long learners and well-rounded people.

Dan