

Joe Kennedy



This week's featured mentor has been at the top of my list since the first month of this website. Getting this modest educator to provide me with a resume has been a seven month challenge! It is my pleasure to introduce you to my Head of School, mentor, hero, teacher and friend, Eagle Scout Joe Kennedy.

The first word that comes to mind when describing our Head of School, Joe Kennedy, is honorable, perhaps the most important attribute of any person.

Although we attended the same church and saw each other regularly since third grade, Mr. Kennedy, an Eagle Scout, first entered my life in a big way when I was in sixth grade. He taught the eighth grade class in our Middle School and his students were his biggest fans. They related how he was so passionate about teaching; he could make the duller subject interesting. He was genuinely committed to having every student learn. The sixth and seventh grade students all looked forward to the day we were old enough to study with Mr. Kennedy. We knew his classes would be our most difficult, but we would survive and emerge smarter but also better-rounded. I can still remember the sad day we learned

he was leaving the school. My class went into mourning.

Several years passed. I had heard that Mr. Kennedy had moved to Boise to assume the position of Head of School of another school with an outdoor education focus. I often wondered if his new students realized how lucky they were. At the end of my freshman year, I was elected Western Region Venturing President. When I returned to school for my sophomore year, I knew I was in trouble. Members of my school's faculty did not share Scouting's values and one made it extremely difficult for me to attend meetings. As the year progressed, my frustration grew. My family and I realized if I wanted to run for National President, I needed to attend a different school. Luckily, one day after church, I ran into Joe Kennedy when he was visiting our town. After inquiring about my education, I shared with him my frustration with the lack of cooperation at my school. Mr. Kennedy suggested that I come to his school. I thought that he was being polite, because his school was three hours away from our home. But he was very serious. When we met and toured his school, he asked me what I would need to go there. I asked for classes he did not have. He said I would have them. I asked for an extra-curricular club, Academic Decathlon. He said he would arrange for funding, but I would have to organize the club. On his word, my family and I began two years of 300-mile round trip weekend commutes for my schooling.

When I arrived to begin the year, I was a bit nervous. I arrived for one class and there were no other students around. Certain there was a mistake, I was prepared to leave until I realized Mr. Kennedy had arranged a class just for me. Good to his word, he provided the class I had requested, even though no other student enrolled. He kept his word, also, about the Academic Decathlon Team. He helped me identify a coach to recruit. When we had the required number of team members, Mr. Kennedy arranged for funding. During our first year, we took the state championship in the small school division. Mr. Kennedy is a man of his word.

Although the curriculum was far more challenging than at my former school, Mr. Kennedy kept his promise and made it easy for me to travel as National Venturing President and keep up with my studies. It never felt as if my successes were an inconvenience, although Mr. Kennedy and my other teachers had to provide special exam times for me. They truly celebrated my blessings, instead of complaining about the extra work. I transferred from a school with a class of 35 where the Headmaster barely knew my name, and acknowledged my existence only when I was featured in the paper or a national magazine; to RiverStone, where my Head of School knows my personal views on Joseph Campbell, cares about me and always keeps his word. Every day I realize how lucky I am to have Joe Kennedy in my life.

Mr. Kennedy has received Bachelors of Arts in Political Science and Social Studies from Washington State University. He received his Master of Education from Central Washington University, and has taken graduate courses in Education Administration, Russian Studies, American History, Curriculum Development, Asian Studies, and Education Leadership. Mr. Kennedy has co-authored three publications: "The Anasazi: Riddles in the Ruins: an Integrated Unit for Middle School Students", "Curriculum Units on Foreign Policy Alternatives" and "102 Very Teachable Films". An expert in Character Education, the conferences Mr. Kennedy has attended are too numerous to mention.

Mr. Kennedy's contributions to RiverStone are not limited to the classroom. RiverStone has an outdoor education program with annual high adventure activities. Mr. Kennedy successfully couples outdoor education with international students, creating a unique educational experience for those fortunate enough to study with him. Over the years, Mr. Kennedy has found the time to be the coach for many sports, ranging from volleyball to golf. This past year he became the Chartering Representative for a Venturing Crew at RiverStone.

I cannot begin to explain how wonderful RiverStone truly is. It is an International Baccalaureate (IB) school, so the curriculum is like advanced placement courses on steroids. RiverStone is, by far, the toughest school I have ever attended. RiverStone's IB students have been 100% successful in gaining an IB diploma (certificate). With a minimum pass of 24 points, RiverStone students have averaged 30 points. It is a truly excellent program with an outstanding faculty led by an honorable Eagle Scout, Joe Kennedy. I am proud to be one of Joe Kennedy's students and a member of RiverStone International School's Class of 2007.