

First and foremost, the state and nation look to results from standardized tests to determine how effectively a school, and classroom has prepared a child. Growth of specific content objectives can be analyzed for each child, teacher, and grade level, to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses. While these results are vital to measure the success of a teacher and a school, they are strictly based from quantitative data. Standardized tests fail to measure the amount of personal growth a child has made, that will in turn affect their entire future as a student and an active member in the community. Rather than teachers, in the nation's and state's eyes, being held accountable for strictly test scores, teachers must also be held accountable for influencing a child's education in a way that can be seen and felt for years. When a teacher has "completed" her job effectively, each child should have a more positive outlook on their education and their future.

While *teaching* a child only requires 180 days of dedication, *influencing* a child will have an affect for a lifetime. Students should enjoy their education, and be excited to come to school. Teachers must be held accountable to provide this level of positive and productive learning environment for all students, so that students feel comfortable within the classroom. Designing lessons that incorporate the latest technological advances, applying content to other areas of a child's life and building strong relationships with each child, have the potential to motivate students to face their academic challenges, and strive to meet a teacher's high expectations. Students must know that a teacher genuinely cares about their present and future well-being.

According to the Department of Public Instruction of North Carolina, the number one reason why students dropped out of high school, in 2009-2010, was because of attendance. How can approximately 7,000 students across North Carolina have such little

motivation to be present in school? What is the educational community not providing for these students, to encourage them to, at the very least, go to school for seven hours a day? Together, students, teachers, parents, administration and the community must join forces to support the education of our future!

Often times, parental involvement requires a teacher to send notes home occasionally, make telephone calls when necessary or even participate in a parent teacher conference once or twice a year. While these forms of contact are important in involving parents in their child's education, this communication lacks *full* participation of members. Effective home-school communities can foster academic, social and behavioral success of those whom actively participate. The Northwest Regional Education Laboratory notes that research proves that effective "family involvement is linked to higher student achievement, better attitudes toward learning, lower dropout rates, and increased community support for education--regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnic/racial background or parents' education level." ("School-Family Connections," para. 4) Due to an incredible potential to positively influence a child's education beyond my classroom, it is time for me to raise the standard of the definition of "parental involvement," to create a more productive home-school community. Quarterly open-house events need to encourage families to come to school to witness the growth made and possibly even learn something new together. Also, in order to help students understand their importance in Harnett County, I can ask volunteers to talk to the students about where they can help. Anything that will encourage students to feel important within their school and community has the potential to change a child's outlook on their future, no matter what their background. The time has come to take one step at a time towards uniting the community, to change the future of countless.