

# ABOUT SETTING GOALS

Recently Seneca High School principal Kim Morales sent a message to Seneca alumni and the community at large asking for volunteers to assist Senior students with “goal setting” for their future. I indicated to Kim that I would be open to helping as long as I knew more specifically what I would be asked to do. As one who has done past volunteer work with public school students I am fully aware of high schools looking to make their students “college and career ready.” Yet I am also aware that often our young people have goals that are not fully compatible with what the adults in their lives envision for them. In giving thought as to what I would say to a young person as to “goal setting” I would first share some of my own struggles while at their point in life. From there I would offer what I hope would be a foundation of primary goals that could be built on now and in the future. They are as follows:

**SHOWING UP:** In other words, making sure to always be present both physically and mentally. This is a difficult job for educators in that public school scheduling does not do a good job of showing our young people the importance of being present on a daily basis. Generally school instruction is interrupted every other week by a “holiday” of some sort. By contrast, when I began attending school the only off days were Thanksgiving (two days), Christmas (one week), and spring break (one week). Years ago while mentoring a Seneca student who played on the baseball team I shared with him the story of Cal Ripken playing in a record 2632 consecutive games. Cal Ripken did not miss a day of work for over 16 years and his teammates knew that he would be both physically present and mentally engaged each day. All of us have a responsibility to “show up” whether that be our families, our places of employment, or our outside commitments. And “showing up” leads to another relevant goal:

**NIELS—“WITH RESPECT.”** Most of us remember when we received our school yearbook and asked our friends to sign. What my classmate Niels Fogt '69 wrote by his picture remains with me to this day. The message was simply “Niels—with respect.” This came from a person who understood the difference between being popular and being respected. Niels earned respect by giving complete effort whether as a student or as a key member of a talented football team. What followed from that was Niels also being generally well-liked by those who knew him. Among other things respect entails accepting and embracing our differences as well as the ways in which we are alike. The person who does so will be able to function well in a variety of life situations.

**LUCK . . . LOVE . . . LAUGHTER.** Another of the messages written to me in my high school yearbook was written by a schoolmate who I also attended church with. After writing a brief bit of the usual well-wishes that a schoolmate would write she ended with the words “luck . . . love . . . laughter.” The depth of thought struck me at the time and even more so later on when I learned that life during high school had not been kind to her and her family. And her message brings to our attention tools that used wisely will enrich the lives of all those we encounter:

Luck is being aware that all of us are presented with opportunities. What makes those opportunities "luck" is taking full advantage and utilizing them for the benefit of all.

Love begins with embracing and accepting yourself fully. Doing so will allow you to accept and receive love whether that love is romantic or not. And sometimes love may be given to you in the form of discipline, accountability, or being picked up when you are unable to go it on your own.

Laughter is an action that not only enriches our lives but our physical health as well. And when we laugh may we always be laughing WITH others as opposed to laughing AT others.

It goes without saying that all of our young people, whether students at Seneca High School or not, will do better in life if we have a clear set of goals for both now and for the future. At whatever point I am asked to assist with Seneca students I will work to make time for them. If any others of you would be open to helping if asked know it would be valued and appreciated. Many thanks for taking the time to listen.

Sam Denny  
Seneca Class of 1969