

QUO NON ASCENDAM?
ENRICHMENT PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

My motto is *Quo Non Ascendam*, meaning, “to what heights can I not aspire.” I believe that I can do almost anything I set my mind to, and if something is impossible for me to accomplish, I can still hope for a path to open that will lead me down the road to achieving the improbable. (To quote The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy, nothing is impossible, just very, very improbable.)

Because of this attitude, I find that I am definitely not a fatalist. I am, in fact, the exact opposite. I think that every decision I make changes the course of my life, perhaps not in a big way, but it’s almost as if there are thousands of other “me’s” out there that have disappeared. For instance, each morning when my alarm goes off, I have to decide whether I’m going to hop right out of bed and maybe have some extra time before I have to go to school or if I’m going to hit the snooze button and use up the possible extra time by sleeping. When I decide to hit the snooze button, the possible “me” that woke up earlier and used some extra time to do something disappears, and I can never get her back. I believe that it is almost impossible that every one of these small decisions has been pre-calculated so that I am powerless to define my own destiny. In addition, what if this pre-calculated Destiny was something other than what I wanted? (If Destiny wants me to be an auto mechanic, I have a few words to say to it...)

I believe that school is the most important key that anyone has to their future. You really can’t accomplish anything without going to school and getting a good education. In fact, I think that schools should be as strict as they need to be so that everyone who attends it is forced to pay attention and behave maturely, if they don’t do it naturally. If someone misbehaves in school, all it shows is their stupidity because not being able to understand and learn (and needing more help) is drastically different from not wanting to learn because you simply don’t care. If you just don’t understand, but you truly want to learn, then there is someone out there – a teacher, a peer, a study group, a book, etc. – who will be able to help you achieve your goals. On the other hand, if you don’t learn because you don’t want to, there is nothing anyone can do for you. Teachers and parents can force you to attend as many after school help sessions as they want, but if you don’t try then it won’t do anything. People who don’t learn because they just don’t care are doomed to learn a lesson ‘the hard way.’ They will never get where they want to be. There is nothing worse than a person who wants to be, say, a doctor, but refuses to be motivated and try. You won’t get anywhere if you don’t care enough to try. Perhaps people need to be taught this. Perhaps the best way to go about it is to expel any and every student who doesn’t put forth a sufficient amount of effort. When they realize that they are headed toward working at a fast food restaurant their whole life, maybe they will also realize that they need to mature and accept delayed gratification. Sure, it’s nice to enjoy instant gratification by slacking off and playing outside instead of doing homework, but I think it’s slightly better to do the homework, be miserable for one afternoon, and go on to work in a rewarding profession. Again, you can do anything you set your mind to.

One complaint I must make about the Brewster Central Schools in particular is that they never seem to give enough attention to the above average students. The names of students who have achieved in sports are almost always announced over the

loudspeaker, and the names of students who have achieved in academics almost always aren't. It's almost as if the administration is afraid of making anyone "feel bad." For instance, in the student handbook, it states that a list of students on the Honor and High Honor Rolls (which is almost everyone because the standards, I feel, are too low) is posted in the school and published in the local news. I have never seen either of these two things happen. For another example, take the 2003 Science Horizons competition. There was an article published in the newspaper that included all the names of the finalists, but it didn't list the names of people who actually went on to win awards. Sure it said the type of award (first, third, and so on), but it didn't actually say who won them. I, for one, would not have any objections if the names announced did not include mine. I think it is important to bring positive attention to those who make outstanding achievements. It would give others more reasons to work toward their goals.

As far as politics go, I honestly don't know if I'm a Republican or a Democrat. However, I think that since we are living in a democracy, that we should be governed by the will of the majority. Isn't that the way our government is supposed to work? It seems to me that these days everyone is more concerned with the minorities, and taking care of them that people in the majority are ultimately spending more tax dollars to help the people that technically aren't supposed to be in control anyway.

On the other hand, I'm not sure that I really think that democracy is the ideal government. After all, it does come down to the fact that the government representatives are being chosen by the "commoners," who may or may not know what they are doing (and I mean that in the best possible way). How can you really be sure that what the people decide is really the best thing for the country? The way I see it, a special kind of dictatorship is what would really be the perfect government. I'm not talking about some crazed control-freak dictator like Mussolini or Hitler. It's because of people like them that everyone is afraid of living under a dictatorship. The kind of dictatorship I'm thinking of would be pretty near impossible to actually arrive at. You would need the perfect humanitarian, a person who has absolutely no self-interest to lead the country. Of course, this dictatorship would be best if it was able to unite the whole world into one big "country" so that there were never any more wars. Everyone would be happy under this special dictator because he (or she) would never try to abuse his powers. He would be genuinely working for the good of everyone else, and with modern science, he would probably be able to keep doing it for a very long time. In addition, since the dictator would be completely selfless, there would probably be a way in which the people could arrange to have a say in the decisions he makes, if they really felt the need to, which they may not. The perfect government would make the people living under it feel completely safe, secure and important (feeling important as in the opposite of communism, where everyone is no better than the next guy).