

An Inspirational Message from Jeremy White

2021 Burroughs Wellcome Fund North Carolina Charter Schools Teacher of the Year



Growing up in five different states and two different countries can impact one's sense of purpose in the world in many different unique ways. Being born in Tennessee, raised in two different states at a time between New Jersey and Tennessee for my early childhood years and raised in Wisconsin and Tennessee in my latter childhood years; living in Ohio for a year during my transition into being a teenager and then finally living permanently in North Carolina where I would finish out my high school years. Only then would I go to college at Elon University for journalism and then move 7500 miles away to Japan to do what exactly with my life? I went to go teach.

As we begin our last month in school for most and we are getting showered with support and appreciation from parents, colleagues, and our students during teacher appreciation week I would like you to reflect on what brought you here to teaching. I'm sure many of you have had PDs or teacher-led meetings or staff meetings where the admin will ask you to reflect on your "why". I am here to challenge you to think a bit differently because being a beginning teacher and being a continued renewed

educator doesn't have to do with "why" it has to do with "how." How am I going to grow these children? How am I going to get what I need to prepare these children for life? How am I supposed to create a vigor for learning in my class? How am I supposed to balance work and life for my family, myself and my students? How am I going to get all of this done? And especially at the end of the school year it is "How am I going to make it to the end of the year and finish strong and come back next year and build on my knowledge and growth as an educator?"

I would challenge you to think of your "how" more than your "why". Your "why" is already solidified or else you wouldn't be a teacher. Your "why" is what gets you to choose being a teacher, your "how" is what you do after you get there that allows you to balance this incredible and necessary industry so that we can do what we came here to do, teach kids.

Your "how" may seem like a daunting task because your "why" is usually a nice story that you tell yourselves to keep yourself motivated when the gas tank is approaching empty. But there is no way to keep a car moving with just your "why"; we need the gas to put in our tank and that is going to take your "how."

Allow me to be so bold and explain how you do this. For every interaction you have with your parents, students, administration, peers, and students go by the Four Agreements. It is a set of rules for oneself that was made popular by Don Migeul Ruiz.

1. Don't take anything personally.
2. Be impeccable with your words.
3. Don't assume.
4. Do your best.

Think about interactions you've had this year that have drained you. Were any one of these rules broken? Did you take something personal from a parent or student that you shouldn't have? Did you say something that could be left up to interpretation and it conveyed the wrong message? Did you assume a peer meant something else as they passed you in the hallway and said a compliment about the way you were dressed? Did you try your best today in everything you did?

You see, if you can actively try to do these four things on a daily basis it helps with your "how" when it comes to the controlled chaos that teaching sometimes is. I teach kindergarten and when I hear a 5th grade teacher say "Wow it looks crazy in here." I don't take that personally because I know what a kindergarten classroom should look like. I say "Thank you, I strive for an open classroom where the kids know their roles and their boundaries and we will get it cleaned

up after this activity.” Now I am being impeccable with my words so that there is no room for interpretation from the other educator. I didn’t assume they were trying to be condescending and therefore I won’t take what they say as a positive or negative. At the end of the day, I know why my room looks the way it is and why my students are engaged the way they are, so I know I am doing my best.

You see, with just a little bit of practice you can help navigate the “how” when you need more than the “why” can provide.

Everyone reading this, I am very proud of you for being in teaching. Please keep being inspired by your “why” and please keep growing in best practice to add to your “how.”



2022 North Carolina Beginning Teacher Virtual Summit REACHING FOR THE STARS

The 2022 North Carolina Beginning Teacher Virtual Summit: Reaching for the Stars is quickly approaching. On June 21st sixteen, pre-recorded sessions from the 2021 summit, will be featured on the 2022 NC BT Virtual Summit page which will made active on the REF Google Site close to the conference date.

This years’ live sessions will feature a welcome message from **Eugenia Floyd**, 2021 Burroughs Wellcome Fund NC Teacher of the Year. An opportunity to connect with regional teachers of the year during the “Lunch and Learn” panel moderated by **Jeremy White**, the 2021 Burroughs Wellcome Fund NC Charter Schools Teacher of the Year. As well as a time to interact with beginning teachers of the year in the closing session panel moderated by **Xavier Adams**, the 2022 North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching Beginning Teacher of the Year.

To receive live session updates and information on the summit via email, register now using this Google Form link: <https://forms.gle/swApMk9La8eKumX89>.

We’re looking forward to an amazing Beginning Teacher Summit experience!



Eugenia Floyd



Jeremy White



Xavier Adams