

“First Things First: Together We Can Make an Impact on Education”

Keynote Address

This client speech won a national Award of Excellence in the APEX 2012 Awards for Publication Excellence competition in category 101: Speech & Script Writing.

EXCERPT 1 (SPEECH OPENING)

Let me tell you a true story about something that happened in a Dayton school about three years ago.

Now this is a school where the vast majority of students participate in the National School Lunch Program – a federal program dating back to the days of Harry Truman – that provides low-cost or free lunches to children each and every school day.

Three years ago, school supplies at this school were very scarce, and you can probably guess why.

Because the parents of these children were struggling to provide the essentials for *life* – things such as food and shelter – there was little money left over to provide the essentials for *learning* – things such as paper and pencils, crayons and notebooks.

Now a teacher at this school – let’s call her Mrs. Meyers – routinely dipped into her own pocketbook to buy school supplies for her students so they’d at least have the basics required for learning. In fact, each year she spent at least 500 dollars of her own money – sometimes as much as 1,000 dollars of her own money – to buy the school supplies her students needed to do their classwork.

One day, Mrs. Meyers was literally down to her last pencil. But in front of her stood two students.

So she faced this dilemma.

She thought, “If I break this pencil in half to help two students in need, which student gets the half with the eraser?”

It’s a dilemma that teachers in our community should NEVER have to face.

But they do.

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EXCERPT 2 (SPEECH CLOSING)

On Feb. 28 this year, Crayons to Classrooms reached a milestone – a “Million Dollar Moment,” if you will – when we surpassed 1 million dollars in school supplies distributed to Dayton-area teachers to help students in need.

It was indeed a milestone marking our momentum.

But in spite of all this progress, the reality is this:

- Without more resources, we can’t restock our free store for teachers so students at our 34 schools continue to have the tools they need to learn.
- Without more resources, we can’t expand our shopping hours, improve services or add new products.
- And without more resources, we can’t begin to help the remaining 54 high-need K-12 schools – 13,000 more students who desperately need school supplies.

Ultimately, that’s our goal: to make sure all 26,500 students at all 88 high-need K-12 schools in our region have the school supplies they need to learn.

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For decades it seems, the great national debate about how to improve education has raged on. It’s complex. It’s political. It’s expensive. And it’s ridden with controversy.

It’s easy to feel completely helpless.

But consider this:

Before we can tackle some of the larger, more complicated challenges related to education, why don’t we do First Things First?

Why don't we get paper and pencils and crayons and notebooks – the basics! – into the hands of EVERY Dayton-area student in need?

After all, it's so simple!

And it's something each and every one of us can do, right here in Dayton, to make a difference.

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At Crayons to Classrooms, we believe if teachers and students have the tools to succeed – they will.

So today I challenge you to make an impact on education.

I challenge you to help local students in need.

I challenge you to donate money or school supplies to Crayons to Classrooms.

If you want to make an even greater impact, also consider donating equipment or services. Or, you might want to host a school supply drive. And we're always looking for volunteers in our free store.

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I'm sure we can all agree that no child should go to school without the basic supplies needed for learning.

And I believe that if we do First Things First, together we can make an impact on education.

Because after all:

We don't want any more classrooms in our community to end up like Mrs. Meyers' classroom three years ago – where the teacher must resort to breaking a pencil in half to help two students in need. ◀