

CAREER & EDUCATION

Pushing Past Your Comfort Zone



First lady Michelle Obama gives a student a hug after speaking to a group of high school students at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. (AP photo)

Michelle Obama tells students to confront fears

(AP) — Michelle Obama told high school students taking part in a mentoring program at Georgetown University last week that being married to the president can be scary at times, because he makes the family get out of its comfort zone.

The first lady urged students not to let fear guide them after a student asked about being worried about going away to college.

"I mean this is scary," she said. "Shoot, being married to Barack Obama? He's got big plans. He's always pushing us beyond our comfort zones, and I'm dragged along going, 'What's he doing now? No, not this.'"

She told the group of about 50 students from schools in Maryland, Washington and Virginia that she had her own doubts about going from a public school

in Chicago to college at Princeton. She said she wondered whether she'd be able to compete with classmates who were wealthier and had gone to some of the best schools in the world. But she said she was willing to work hard and found her strengths.

"One of my strengths was that I had a big mouth, and I liked to talk a lot," she said, adding that she tells her own daughters not to be afraid to speak up.

She said her advice for college students is not to procrastinate, to ask for help and not to get into credit card debt.

"So in college buy what you can afford, which for most college students is nothing," she said.

The students visited classes and toured the Georgetown campus before spending about an hour with the first lady.

Parent's Corner

BY RON HERNDON



Teachers Poorly Prepared

Parent's Preamble: I will ensure my child receives a quality education. If I don't fight for my child's education, no one else will. It's worth the effort, my child's future depends upon me.

Recently eight current Portland area teachers and administrators met and discussed the teaching training they received at Portland State University. All eight individuals obtained bachelor's and master's degrees, and combined they have over 70 years of teaching experience.

The common theme all eight educators shared was how

poorly prepared they were to teach children. All stated that PSU did not teach them how to teach children to read, write or how to teach math.

When assigned to their schools, the principals wanted teachers who can teach children to read, but during their undergraduate and graduate school studies, the educators of the future were not given any instruction, clues or hints how to teach reading.

As one of the teachers explained, why would the complete lack of practical experience be such an issue? Because without that training, a

teacher entering a Portland Public Schools classroom is literally learning on the job, left to get the training the best way they can.

The eight instructors also said they all received inadequate preparation to successfully work with an ethnically-diverse student population. They found this alarming when considering many Portland area schools have minority populations that range from 30 to well over 60 percent.

"Out of roughly 18 months of graduate school training, I received approximately two weeks (nine days) of diversity training," one of the teachers said. "During that time not once did we visit, train with or observe a school or classroom with a diverse student population. There was no 'hands on experience' in a diverse classroom, nor was there any interaction with students of color."

In essence, new teachers in Portland are expected to walk into a diverse classroom of 20-

40 students and effectively teach them all.

"This is impossible if you have not been taught how to relate to a diverse student population," one of the teachers said. "We did not learn effective classroom management or how to effectively engage parents in their children's education. We received no knowledge of how to deal with special needs children. Overall, I felt unprepared for the real world of teaching and had to

learn everything on the job."

"PSU professors haven't been in a public school classroom for decades. They have theory, but no current experience with the 21st century child," the teacher said.

Ron Herndon is a long-time advocate for educational opportunities for African-American children. He has served as director of Head Start in Portland since 1975.

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