

Defining Success: A Personal Perspective

Webster's dictionary defines success as a degree or measure of succeeding, a favorable or desired outcome and attaining wealth, favor, or eminence. It is easy to hyper-focus on a person's wealth or possessions to indicate success. I disagree with this philosophy because my career will never make me wealthy.

No one goes into teaching to be rich in material wealth. What I am rich in is experience and knowledge. Every child in my classroom brings their own story with them and adapting to meet the needs of each student is a daily task. To be a teacher means to never stop learning. We attend professional development, adapt to new standards, learn new terminology, and update our curriculum. I am successful when my students gain experience and knowledge.

Is success defined by obtaining favor or eminence? In some cultures, teachers are highly regarded as experts. In America, however, teachers are often viewed as government-funded babysitters. So, I cannot define success as obtaining favor or eminence. Instead, I feel successful when a student thanks me for talking to them, tells me they loved my class, or says I provide them with a safe place. That is my favor and eminence.

Outside of my career, how do I define success? Growing up in the late '90s I was fed that a house and white picket fence were the markers of success. However, student loans, housing costs, inflation, and stagnant wages have led my generation to be called "the burnout generation." Success can not look like it did when millennials were growing up. I am lucky to own my house, and I am fortunate to have a fantastic family, but I struggle with calling that success. It is a process of being happy with what I have and

finding self-love and self-acceptance. I won't say I've reached that nirvana, but I believe striving for it is a marker of success in itself.

Part of my journey to feeling successful is self-betterment. I am pursuing my M.A. in Education as a Literacy Specialist. I am excited to learn new skills to help my students become successful members of society by improving their reading and writing skills. Many students struggle due to low reading levels and a lack of understanding of how to read for fun. I want them to be successful, and I believe that is my true purpose as a human being. To help.

In redefining success, I find it not in wealth or societal favor but in personal growth, my impact on others, and the continuous journey of learning and adapting. True success lies in the everyday victories, the gratitude of those we help, and the fulfillment of our purpose. For me, it is about enriching lives through education, fostering a love for learning, and contributing to the betterment of society. This holistic approach to success brings more profound satisfaction and aligns with my values and goals as an educator and a human being.