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# Principal Montgomery: Secondary Education in 2017

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1 **Mackenzie:** So can you tell me a little bit about like your upbringing and education, like when  
2 you went to school, where, and any activities you might have participated in?

3

4 **Virdie:** Sure I grew up in Graham Texas and I went through all kindergarten through twelfth  
5 grade there. Graduated in Graham high school 1972, and went to play basketball at Hardin  
6 Simmons for a couple of years in Abilene. Found the love of my life and uh she was graduating  
7 and I still needed some, so she got a job teaching in Brownfield Texas out by Lubbock. And uh it  
8 was so I went ahead and transferred to Texas Tech cause its right there, and I finished my degree  
9 at Texas Tech and got to teach and coach in uh in Brownfield for fifteen years where I was a did  
10 everything the first two years and I became a head tennis coach there and we had a lot of success  
11 there doing that, and decided I wanted to be a principal and came to uh went and got my masters  
12 in Sul Ross State University and got my first principals job at a place called Claude Texas up by  
13 Amarillo, class A school. And I spent two years there with the Levelland Middle School for  
14 seven years, Levelland high school for five and then came here for two years as assistant  
15 principal, went to Commerce for four years, and I've been back here ever since. So that's my  
16 education. I have a master degree and superintendent certification, and all of that, and uh played  
17 college basketball for two seasons and uh fell in love with tennis though and I coached tennis for  
18 fifteen years.

19

20 **Mackenzie:** So what are some similarities and differences you've seen from when you went to  
21 school to like school now?

22

23 **Virdie:** Its night and day. Uh when I went to school and if we're talking about high schools, we  
24 had to have 18 credits graduate. Classes were an hour long. Okay and uh today we have to have  
25 26 credits, classes are about 50 minutes long, and we are asking more out of kids today than we  
26 ever have in the history of time. Uh, you know my first two years in school in high school I spent  
27 a lot of time typing. I took four years of typing, and today ya'll come into high school already  
28 knowing how to do it. You know, but I spent four years learning how, now I got good at it. I was  
29 typing 125-130 words a minute with no mistake by senior year, but uh and I will say if I had to  
30 pick a skill that I learned in school during my time that I still use today, it's typing. Cause I type  
31 a lot, I write a lot, and uh I have people that do it that don't use whole keys and stuff like that.

32 But that's what I remember, that's the big change. You know the technology was so much  
33 different. I typed on a manual type writer which nobody's even seen in probably two decades,  
34 and uh whenever they came out with that IBM with the little head on it and it moved around that  
35 was the most awesome thing. I finally got to use that type writer I thought I had died and gone to  
36 heaven. So just the uh whole dynamic of schools changed. The only thing that hasn't changed is  
37 we still put kids in rows and teach standing up in front of kids, everything else has just changed  
38 totally.

39

40 **Mackenzie:** Do you think it's a good thing that we're asking more out of kids now?

41

42 **Virdie:** I wish we'd go back a little bit. I think uh if I had, if I could put together the perfect  
43 school I think we should specialize sooner. I think we're uh (stammering) especially with  
44 colleges I see no reason for a kid to go to college and take all the stuff they're having you take  
45 that you're never ever gonna use, and you're paying for it. You could cut college expenses in  
46 half, I know I'm gonna lose a lot of professors, because I don't think I think a lot of what the  
47 professors are teaching, and their subject matter is just fun for them to do because I don't think  
48 it's any value to yourself or the people that aren't interested in that area. I don't think every kid  
49 should have to do that. It's expensive, (stammering) cause when I was going to college they said  
50 we want you to have a well-rounded education, but I was taking courses that I was uninterested  
51 in and has not had anything to do with anything I'm doing in life. Why couldn't I just go and  
52 straight into what I'm doing. I think high schools should be the same way. We're teaching, we're  
53 making kids take subjects that they're never gonna use, and uh (stammering) whenever I'm  
54 saying this out loud and putting it on tape everybody's gonna think that I'm just as crazy as a  
55 loon, but that's I've been in it 41 years and that's what I see. I use a kid I had up in Commerce  
56 for an example. This kid I knew he (stammering) when I met him he was a freshmen and I knew  
57 what he was gonna be doing whenever he walked across the stage if I could just get him across  
58 the stage. He was gonna work for his dad, and he was gonna work out at the out on the ranch.  
59 That's all the kid ever wanted to do, and I'm sitting there trying to make him take physics his  
60 senior year. And he did not want to do physics, but he had to have it to graduate (stammering)  
61 the kid was bringing his animals to school in uh in trailers every day and going out during  
62 passing period and he was taking care of them. That's that's who he was. So why am I taking

63 and making this kid take algebra II and physics (stammering) and that's been six seven years  
64 ago, and you know what he's doing today? He's working out with his dad on the field and he's  
65 doing okay. But but we harassed the dog out of that kid for four years trying to get him to do  
66 stuff he didn't need to do, and we're doing that. I mean kids once they figure out what they  
67 wanna do that's what we oughta do is get them there as quick as we can.

68

69 **Mackenzie:** So why did you decide to go into the profession as a whole?

70

71 **Viridie:** I could tell and this is one of my strengths and one of my weaknesses. When I was nine  
72 years old I knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to teach and I wanted to coach, and all I ever  
73 thought about doing was when I was growing up. I knew, so I make that my weakness because  
74 when I see kids at high school age and they don't know what they want to do I don't relate to  
75 that. My own children when I asked them their senior year "what do you wanna do" they had no  
76 idea. I don't get that cause I've always known, so I don't understand how people don't already  
77 know what they wanna do. Doctor lawyer whatever it is I just don't get why they don't know  
78 cause I knew and I've always known, so that's a weakness but it's also a strength in that I do see  
79 the value in knowing what you need for a student or a person to know what they wanna do cause  
80 once you know what you wanna do there's hoops you jump through to get there. I'm the only  
81 person in my family whoever even went to college much less graduated, but in order for me to  
82 do what I wanted to do I saw the path and I knew I had to have a college degree. They weren't  
83 gonna let me teach and coach if I didn't have a college degree, so that kept me on the path. But I  
84 knew what I wanted to do, so when people don't know what they want to do I don't care if  
85 they're sixteen, seventeen, nineteen, thirty "what's the path" "where am I going". There's no  
86 place to see that, so I see that as a strength as well because I do see that value in knowing what  
87 you want to do it's kinda called goals in some people's lives. That's why it's important to me.

88

89 **Mackenzie:** So you've held jobs as just teaching, but why did you decide to become like a  
90 principal?

91

92 **Viridie:** For me personally I had been teaching for, when I hit ten years it got to be and if you  
93 know me well enough you know I get bored easily and I like to have things I like change I like

94 things to be doing, but I married somebody who doesn't like change oaky she was just as happy  
95 being doing what we were doing and the whole bit, but I wanted more. So after about ten years I  
96 got I started getting antsy about doing something else. I even looked at getting out of education,  
97 but once you've got ten years in as an educator you're not making a lot of money but you're  
98 making more than a say startup jobs gonna do in a profession. So I started looking at other  
99 professions and I would've had to take a cut in pay to go be an entry level at some other job so I  
100 looked at it and said so "what's the next level", "what do you do", "what's the promotion", if I'd  
101 of had my choice I would've wanted to be an athletic director but who hires a tennis coach as an  
102 athletic director. It just doesn't happen, you hire your football coaches to have the athletic  
103 director's job, so I didn't see any other position in the education field other than principal, I did  
104 not want to be a principal, every principal I'd ever known was somebody I didn't want to be like  
105 that, they were mean and they were opinionated and things like that. I may be all of those things,  
106 but I didn't see myself as that why so it didn't attract me, but then (stammering) after fifteen  
107 years I gotta do something else and that was just the natural progression, so I started my masters  
108 to work on being a principal and then I fell in love with it. And I thought I don't have to be like  
109 those other people that I've seen, we all look at somebody who's in the profession to kinda take  
110 our personality and put it with that. There was nobody like that for me everybody I'd seen do it I  
111 didn't want to do what they did. Once I figured out I could go and still be me and still have my  
112 personality and still be around the kids, cause the kids is what drove me there. That was one  
113 reason I didn't want to be a principal cause ever principal I'd ever seen I mean the kids didn't  
114 even know who the guy was and I didn't want to be that person. You know but once I got into it  
115 I fell in love with it and I'm gonna do it the way I wanna do it and finally found somebody who  
116 would let me do it.

117

118 **Mackenzie:** What do you think is the overall purpose of school or obtaining an education?

119

120 **Viridie:** See I'm gonna be different there too because when I first started you know people would  
121 say we're trying to get you college ready I never saw it as that. Basically what I saw was even as  
122 a teacher I'm gonna teach the curriculum, this is what they want me to teach. I'm gonna teach the  
123 curriculum to you if you get it you get it if you don't you don't. You're gonna use it for whatever  
124 it is. I think that's the way to do it. See I'm against grades, I don't even think we oughta have

125 grades. I think at your, I taught world history and if you're gonna come in my world history class  
126 I'm gonna make it as inviting as it can be and I want you to want to be in there to learn. Then  
127 you're gonna get out of it what you put into it cause I've learned if somebody likes something  
128 they'll get good at it, and I use athletics as an example all the time because I watched kids  
129 especially seventh and eighth grade everybody tries out for everything they all wanna do it they  
130 all think, but who's there when they're seniors and you're a great example whenever you were a  
131 freshman there were lots of freshman. You had a whole team of freshman. How many seniors  
132 graduated when you graduated?

133

134 **Mackenzie:** Five

135

136 **Virdie:** Five, so five is all that was left. So, kids go where they're good and the kids that like it  
137 stay there. In Levelland I was a principal, Levelland we'd have seventy something kids come out  
138 for seventh grade girls' basketball because Levelland was a big deal. They have seven state  
139 championships there. They averaged about three seniors graduating, so what happened to those  
140 seventy kids from seventh grade to those seniors. Kids go where they're successful, so that's  
141 why I think kids oughta go in there with the reason to learn. Another example I have, I just used  
142 this the other day with my staff. I hate grades, because the first part of the year everything is so  
143 cool and kids come into your class and they're excited to be in there every day until you give the  
144 first test. Once you give the first test there's a grade now there's a pecking order. The smart kids  
145 over here and the kids over here. Now they don't care anymore, they don't like what you're  
146 teaching. Even the smart kids now that you've given a test they're just looking for what you're  
147 gonna give to them on the test. They're not really there to learn. They're in there to what does he  
148 want me to know, and give it back to me on a test, so I can get the grade. But if I didn't have  
149 grades then you would come in there every day thinking what is he gonna teach me today and I  
150 think you would learn more. I'd like to see a plan like that someday. So I'm different in the  
151 respect and I think the job of the teacher is to get you life experience to lead you where you want  
152 to go and for you to learn whatever the subject matter is.

153

154 **Mackenzie:** So I would say and I brag about it at UD all the time that Wylie High is a very  
155 successful high school, as a principal what do you think is like what sets us apart. What's the key  
156 factor for making a school so efficient.

157

158 **Virgie:** Well you've been here and you've been here the whole time I was here. If I had to say  
159 one thing it would be the relationships. I think the kids wanna come here, come to school for the  
160 most part. They know something weird might happen. It's fun to come to. It's not such a  
161 drudgery to come to, and I think they feel liked. You know? They feel supported. I just believe  
162 they time is the most valuable gift you can give anybody, so that's why I go to stuff. I think if  
163 I'm there then the kids know that I value them, okay. I tell parents that the most valuable gift you  
164 can give to your kids is to be where your kid is doing stuff, and you know what's so funny about  
165 it is I go around and sometimes I'm there more often than some kid's parents are. And you know  
166 it always pulls me away, I'm going "How is that happening?" you know I just feel like every time  
167 I go someplace here oughta be you know for the most part (stammering) someone representative  
168 of the family should be there, because the kid then looks. That's where they look, they look up in  
169 the stands to see who's there you know they look for support. Even the coldest callous kids got  
170 his eye turned to somebody to see where that person is. I want them to know, **I want a kid to**  
171 **feel like they're loved, they're cared for, and that what they are doing matters.** I think if you  
172 can make that happen in a culture I think it benefits them.

173

174 **Mackenzie:** Side note I know that was something we always talked about how involved you  
175 were and it was something we really appreciated as athletes. Um so I guess more in my age  
176 technology has become important in classrooms, do you think this is a good and bad thing or just  
177 one or the other?

178

179 **Virgie:** I think it's a little bit of both. It just depends on what it is you're going into. I think  
180 technology, we've become reliant upon it and I can't stand not to be. Just like right now I felt it  
181 buzz, I've got an email I don't know who it's from and it's driving me nuts not being able to  
182 look at it. And that gets me in trouble driving down the road cause I'm the same way, but I like  
183 to be in touch and I think technology keeps you in touch. It is a mechanism to get to kids, that's

184 what they do. So and I tell teachers if you're boring you better be using technology because kids  
185 wanna be entertained today.

186

187 **Mackenzie:** Um do you think you've noticed a change in the priorities schools hold for  
188 academic performances or standards?

189

190 **Virdie:** I think that everything's gone up. The expectations are high. The expectations are off the  
191 charts again like I said a while ago, we're asking more out of kids today than we've ever asked  
192 them to do. I mean we're putting you into situations where you have to know more, you have to  
193 do more. Your world is more competitive than it was for me. The downside to what we're doing  
194 today is that in my day there was a place for kids to go who weren't academic today there's not  
195 many places to go for kids who aren't academic. You know there's nobody pumping gas, there's  
196 nobody and that's all self-serve now and that kid that's really more of a hands on kids who's a  
197 mechanic. He's gotta be smart today to even get a mechanics job you didn't use to have to be  
198 that way, so the technology is what drives it and uh I think we're missing the boat if we don't  
199 push that on kids.

200

201 **Mackenzie:** So in the curriculum itself have you seen big changes or not so much.

202

203 **Virdie:** Well it depends on the subject. You know I taught history for fifteen years and history  
204 doesn't change. Okay the books change, and when they change it all they do is reorganize it, put  
205 it different ways. I use to hate that. I'm a chronology kind of person, I wanna take the history you  
206 tell me where to start and I'm gonna go and I'm gonna build it. I got a book one time when I was  
207 still teaching that broke it up into like okay were gonna teach this civilization. So you started  
208 from the Greeks and the all of that. Then you went to the Roman empire, then you went all the  
209 way up to America, but then the next section was on monarchs, so now you went back to the  
210 ancient world again, I hated that. I don't think kids saw continuity and I hated that. So, that kinda  
211 stuff has no changed much, but the technology is amazing I mean I've got a whole building out  
212 there for courses that weren't even there ten years ago. We wouldn't of known what to call those  
213 things, those course. It's very important that we tap into that. But, yeah the curriculum has just  
214 been. Algebra one is still algebra one. I think world history is still world history, but boy when



215 you start talking about computer and technologies and robots and science has just evolved into  
216 something amazing. The technology has helped us present it. I would love to teach history today  
217 cause in my day I had to go find everything. Today you can get on the internet and if you want a  
218 video or two-minute clip over something you can show actual footage of the day it happened and  
219 stuff like that and I think that enhances the teaching. But the curriculum itself they're still  
220 teaching basic things about it. I wanted to teach concepts more than dates and times.

221

222 **Mackenzie:** So I would say that the biggest educational movement recently is the  
223 implementation of dual credit, which is something I did when I was here. What do you think is  
224 gonna be the next big movement in education?

225

226 **Virdie:** I think we're going to see and I'm hoping it comes by sooner than later cause I see kids  
227 graduating from high school ready to go to work. I think we're headed there but right now the  
228 dual credit thing. We have kids graduating now with twenty something hours. I don't know how  
229 many hours you had.

230

231 **Mackenzie:** I have a full year ahead, so I'm graduating next year.

232

233 **Virdie:** One of our students the other day is graduating a full year from A&M. I saved her  
234 seventy something thousand dollars, that's why my comments a while ago about kids taking stuff  
235 that's gonna be irrelevant to them. See what we're doing now is we're still doing the four-year  
236 college, but you're getting away all your basic away in high school. At some point why can't we  
237 go ahead and teach the dual credit be. Do away with all the basics things and do what you're  
238 gonna do in life, so when you walk about of the high school you don't necessarily have to go to a  
239 four-year institution. You can go to work. You know and the problem with that is are those jobs  
240 available. A statistic I saw the other day is some fifty or sixty percent of the jobs that you're  
241 going you're high school kids gonna do today hadn't even been invented yet. Okay, so if you do  
242 get those early starts the jobs are available. See that's the only downside to that. I do think that's  
243 where we're going because college is getting so expensive and we're making kids take things  
244 that they're never gonna use in life. You know I get the value of art history, but art history for me  
245 I've got three hours of it and I sit in a class for three hours at Hardin Simmons University and

246 paid whatever the tuition was for that. I have no affection for it, I have no use for it whatsoever  
247 but I have it on my transcript. Why? (stammering) I didn't do that. My life would be today where  
248 it is without appreciation for that. Not picking on art history that's just me.

249

250 **Mackenzie:** So, that's all my questions but do you have any last you wanted to say or anything?

251

252 **Viridie:** I just think that education. I think today still education is that most absolute valuable  
253 thing that we can give to a child. To prepare them for the future. I don't think we're necessarily.  
254 The states wants you to do it, the politically correct thing to say high schools are preparing you  
255 for college. But I don't think that should be my purpose, because we're gonna graduate around  
256 five hundred kids this year. Of those five hundred kids are you telling me class ran number four  
257 hundred through five hundred are college ready. I don't necessarily think so, but do we keep the  
258 in high school until they are college ready. I don't think that's possible either. I think we need to  
259 give kids a place to go. Give them the skills necessary so that they can go out and build their own  
260 skills in society to better themselves. That's what I think the high school is. I think that's what  
261 education's purpose is. And I wanna build confidence. I want the kids to know they can do it, and  
262 have the skills to do those things.

263

264 **Mackenzie:** Do you think the classes we offer like the CTE will become more popular in  
265 schools?

266

267 **Viridie:** They have just, our numbers have just blown up in that area. That's what kids are  
268 interested in. That's what they wanna do and I think that and the health science thing is probably  
269 the fastest growing curriculum in the country. And I am amazed at how many kids I get in here  
270 asking what they wanna do and they wanna do something in the medical field. Whether it be a  
271 nurse a doctor and everything in between. So, that's the issue too and I think one of the things  
272 we've got to be able to do is we're got to be able. I think Wylie does as good as any place I've  
273 ever seen is we get kids to thinking about their futures sooner, so you don't have to make  
274 mistakes. I know a lot of people who go to college thinking they wanna do something or they  
275 hear that myth that oh you got time, just take your basics get those out of the way. Dan gum kids  
276 are graduating with their basics now you know what are they gonna do? Then they get into their,

277 what they think they wanna do and they don't like it When they don't like it that's a waste of  
278 money you know and time. Your life is time you know. I wasted a whole year of my life trying  
279 to be this and I don't wanna do it. I would rather you make that mistake when you're in high  
280 school. (stammering) We've hit a real good mix with that here at Wylie cause we're asking  
281 eighth graders to start thinking about that and then some of them are changing their minds and  
282 they get up I high school and then they're better put to go into whatever life has for them after  
283 us.

284

285 **Mackenzie:** Well thank you for answering my questions. I appreciate your time.

286

287 **Virdie:** You bet man! It's always good to see you bud.