

Philosophy of Teaching

When a student knows that you set high standards, and when they know you care about them, I have found them to be magnificent achievers.



I represent a key factor of the bigger world to students. I am the window they peer through to get a safe, yet realistic picture of the world they will soon enter. It's an opportunity for them to make mistakes, to take risks and to find what I call their "voice."



My philosophy is to bring students to that place of opportunity to learn, that spot in history or geography where they can feel free to ask, "Why?"



Here is the essence of learning – it's not what we learn, but that we learn what we can with every possible moment.



Challenging students to use their own mental resources is a critical aspect of instruction.



By demonstrating a sincere care and love for learning, we as teachers can provide a backdrop for students to admire, emulate and aspire.

Biography

Eric Combs brings to the classroom 20 years of experience in the United States Air Force (USAF) Security Forces. He trained with the world's elite soldiers and lived in communities throughout Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

On April 20, 1999, he was serving as chief of Air Base Defense for 8,000 troops at a South Korean air base when he turned on the television and viewed the unfolding horror at Columbine High School. In those moments, he felt an overwhelming need to further serve his country by helping young people as a leader and role model.

Following his retirement from the USAF, he entered the teaching profession through the Ohio Troops to Teacher program and the Expanding the Pool of Qualified Teachers grant. He earned his bachelor's degree in anthropology in 1990 and master's degree in education in 2005.

In 2001, he joined the staff at Fairborn High School as an instructor for its Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps. He taught American history, military history, customs and courtesies, outdoor education and orienteering/land navigation.

Since 2003, he has been the Delta Team Social Studies teacher at Fairborn, teaching ninth grade at-risk students in the school within a school program. He also has served as Nighthawks teacher for an alternative high school program.

Eric Combs brings social studies to life for his students by sharing rich experiences from his extraordinary career.

He is married and has one daughter. He lives in Bellbrook.

2006

Ohio Teacher of the Year



"My message to teachers is threefold: serve the students first, master your subject and always defy mediocrity."

– Eric Combs



Lifelong Learner

The 2006 Ohio Teacher of the Year possesses multiple degrees in a variety of fields, displaying his wide-ranging interests and intellect.

He earned a master's degree in education from the University of Dayton and is currently attending Antioch University where he is completing a second master's degree in educational leadership.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in anthropology from the University of Wyoming, and has associate degrees in anthropology, industrial security systems and emergency medical services from three different colleges.

Eric Combs continues his learning outside of the classroom to improve his instruction. He is a member of the National Council for the Social Studies and the Fairborn Education Association.

His dedication to the teaching profession was recognized when he was named Fairborn High School's 2004-2005 Teacher of the Year. He also has been included in "Who's Who Among American Teachers" for the past three years.

His passion for learning is contagious and an inspiration to his students.



Eric Combs

Through the eyes of his colleagues...

"Students are the center of his teaching style."

"If he chose another path in life, our school would not be the same."

"Eric has students returning to visit him from college and the work world, all of whom share stories of his inspiration and leadership."

"As a teacher and parent, I can say that I would work hard to get my children in Eric's classes."

"His innovative personality sets him on another level. I can assure you Fairborn High School's rise from the Academic Watch category to the Effective School category was in no small way attributed to Eric Combs and his success with our at-risk students."

"When Eric isn't teaching, he's helping out in the building with computer problems, discipline issues and school programs. He's a 'yes man'; he says yes to whatever is asked of him at school."

A Leader in School and Community

In 2003, Fairborn High School began a "school within a school" initiative, called Delta Team, to teach its most at-risk students and bring them to acceptable learning levels. Eric Combs was the principal's first choice to be part of the four-person teaching team.

He is the "go-to guy" at the school, in the district and in the community. His inclusion of technology in the classroom sets the standard for the faculty and he selflessly gives of his time to colleagues. He enjoys showing others how to use technology, data and support equipment to enhance their ability to serve students.

He is known for his leadership in the professional development realm as well. He has conducted sessions for staff members in differentiated instruction methods; child abuse symptoms and reporting; school safety; and digital cameras, video editing and a variety of other technology related areas.

In September 2004, he organized a Unity Day celebration to remember the victims of September 11, Columbine, Paducah and other national tragedies. It also is a day to bring the community together to start the school year in the spirit of unity.

To further connect students with the world, he brings 'witnesses to history' to the school, including a Holocaust survivor and liberator; returning troops from Iraq; and local police, firefighters and Air Force personnel. His students write to deployed soldiers so they know they are not forgotten while they serve in hostile areas.