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Career Day

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Career Day

by

Leah Klaas  Scarlet December  Jojo Miller
We would like to thank
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It was a very special day in Ms. Caldwell’s class. “Okay everyone, today we are going to talk about careers! Careers are jobs you have as an adult that you do for a long time,” Ms. Caldwell explained. “Let’s explore some of the careers you can have.”

“There are so many things you can do as a career. First of all, you can be a scientist! You can dive deep down in the ocean to discover things no one’s seen before.”

“You can study rocks, big, small, sparkly, and sharp. You can build airplanes and soar high in the sky or you can dig up dinosaur bones or ruins of ancient hidden cities…. You can help end suffering in the world by finding a cure for cancer and helping people get healthy.”
One of Ms. Caldwell’s students raised their hand up high. “Yes, Haunani?”

“You could even study the universe and all its galaxies, like Neil deGrasse Tyson! He’s the director of a planetarium in New York and he’s even had a TV show about space,” Haunani spoke excitedly.

“That’s right!” Ms. Caldwell agreed, “Tyson is most famous for talking about really complicated things about space in a way that most people can understand.”
“He’s also the reason Pluto is no longer considered a planet! He’s really smart and well known in his field and to the greater public.”
“When he was a child, Tyson was in love with space. He watched a show about all the wonders of the universe and knew that he wanted to be an astronomer. Tyson went to a science high school in New York City, and at fifteen he was giving lectures on astronomy, the study of stars and space. When he grew up he got his doctorate in astrophysics and then worked at the Hayden Planetarium in New York City.”

“However, many of his teachers and classmates thought Tyson wouldn’t be a good scientist,” Ms. Caldwell explained. “Because he is African-American, they thought he’d be a better athlete. Tyson said that if it weren’t for the fact that he loves space so much, he might have listened to them.”

“That’s so dumb,” one of the students exclaimed, “I can’t believe they wanted him to be an athlete.”

“Well,” Ms. Caldwell replied, “you are right that it was wrong for the people around Tyson to judge his abilities based on the color of his skin. But being an athlete is a genuine career and a lot of people work hard so they can become professional athletes.”
“Oh, oh, like Jeremy Lin!” Serena rejoiced “He’s my favorite basketball player. People didn’t think he could become a professional athlete because he was Asian, but he sure showed them! He’s in the NBA now, and people call him “Linsanity” because he’s so good. He’s broken all sorts of records.”

“Very good Serena! Lin is an excellent example of a professional athlete! While he is famous now, he had to work hard to get where he is today. At first, people didn’t think Lin should be playing basketball. Although his parents let him play basketball, they tried to get him to play piano and focus on his education more. Lin was a very smart student, always top of his class. He also became one of the best basketball players on his teams.”

“Despite this, many people didn’t believe he could play well because he didn’t look like the rest of the players. Many people said mean things to him, but he didn’t let this stop him.”
“Because he focused so hard at playing basketball, the people around him started to support him, now he gets to do what he loves everyday.”
Ms. Caldwell looked around at her students, “And now Jeremy Lin travels all over the world to inspire kids just like you to do what makes them happy. What about you, kids?” she asked, “Would like to travel as part of your career?”

Alicia slowly raised her hand. “Does space count?”
Ms. Caldwell smiled brightly, “Of course space counts! Can you tell us about someone who has been to space, Alicia?”
Alicia smiled, “Well, I really like Ellen Ochoa. She’s an engineer and has been to space four times! Her job was making sure the rocket’s computers worked properly while they were in space.”
“Did you know that in school, she was often told that she couldn’t accomplish her dream because it wasn’t a job for women?” Ms. Caldwell asked, “Even so, Ellen didn’t listen and decided to pursue her dreams anyway, and in 1991 she became the first hispanic woman astronaut.”

“I heard she played the flute and was a very talented musician,” another student said.

“Ellen really shows us how we don’t have to choose just one thing: you can play the flute and go to space!” Ms. Caldwell chuckled.

“Or play the flute in space!” The whole class laughed joyfully.
After the class settled back down, Ms. Caldwell noticed one of her students didn’t seem very enthusiastic about the lesson. “What’s wrong, Charles?” she asked.

Charles looked sheepishly up at his teacher, “Well, Ms. Caldwell, I’m not sure I really want to be a scientist or an athlete or travel. What if all I really want to do is help people?”

Ms. Caldwell beamed at her student, “There are so many ways you can help people, Charles.” She turned to the rest of the class, “There are many people in this world who dedicate their lives to helping others.”
“Let me tell you about a little girl from a country called Pakistan. Her name is Malala Yousafzai and she really loved learning. When she was little, there was a group of bad people who made it very unsafe for her to go to school because they didn’t want girls to get an education. Malala didn’t want this to stop her, so she kept going to school anyways.” Ms. Caldwell looked at her students seriously, “Eventually, these bad people tried to hurt her and she was forced to leave her country to go to a hospital. But she didn’t let this stop her. She continued to fight so girls in Pakistan could get an education, and she told her story so that the whole world would know about the problems happening in her country.”

Ms. Caldwell turned to look at Charles, “She became famous as a civil rights activist at the age of nine, not much older than you are. Malala shows us that not only can you grow up to be someone who helps others, you can do it now as kids. If you see injustice now, you can work against it now. You don’t have to be a grown-up to change the world.”
Ms. Caldwell looked around the room at all her bright and brave young students, “Malala is not the only one who had a lot of difficulties. All of these people we’ve talked about have faced some sort of injustice.”

“Yeah,” one student frowned, “my sister told me Neil deGrasse Tyson would get stopped outside the physics building at his college by the university police because he was black.”

Alicia looked at Serena. “I can’t believe people didn’t think Jeremy Lin could play basketball because he was Asian and didn’t look like the other basketball players.”

“It’s not fair that people told Ellen Ochoa she couldn’t be an astronaut just because she was a woman!” Haunani hollered.

Charles looked back at Ms. Caldwell, “People shouldn’t keep you from following your dreams just because you look different.”

“Yeah!” the rest of the class cheered.
“All of these people did great things because they followed their dreams and overcame the obstacles other people put in their way. What’s your dream?”
Ellen Ochoa

Credit: NASA, Public Domain

Neil deGrasse Tyson

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Malala Yousafzai

Credit: DFID - UK Department for International Development, CC BY 2.0

Jeremy Lin

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