

#ReconnectTuesdays



Hello,

MY NAME IS
MR. DANE SEARS

Woodbridge Early Childhood
Education Center Principal



#ReconnectTuesdays

with Mr. Dane Sears

What do you love about Greenwood?

I love coming to work in Greenwood every day. I think what I like about Greenwood is working for the Woodbridge School District. It has a small town community feel and the businesses that are in Greenwood are very generous towards our school and our students. We get requests quite regularly from some of the businesses in town asking how they can assist with school supply drives. We've had some come in and bring things for teacher appreciation week. We have a really great relationship with the police officers and they always assist if we have a need for anything. And it's the same with the fire department if we have a need for help with traffic control, they're the first ones to volunteer up some fire police to help with traffic and the Greenwood police do the same. They assist us with some of our drills that we do and things like that. So it's that small town feel where you kind of know everyone and people are happy to help out when they can.



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What makes Greenwood a good home?

I think what makes Greenwood a good home is that it's such a likeable community. You can get to know people in the community, the town council, the police department, and the fire department. I think that housing is affordable and one of the best parts is that the kids who live here can come to the Woodbridge School District. They can come to WECEC from Pre-K through second grade. We work hard to provide a solid foundation for students while developing a love for learning. The students can spend up to 15 years together in the district if they begin with Pre-K and really develop a strong bond with the kids that they're going to school with and carry that all the way through their time here.



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What makes Greenwood a good home?

There are good restaurants in Greenwood that people patronize and there's plenty of local businesses. I think some of the local businesses are starting to come back from the difficulties of Covid and the fire, among other things in town. Things are kind of returning to normal.



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If you had the ability to make any improvement to the town, what would it be?

I wish we had a grocery store now. If we had a place besides the Dollar General that you could get some groceries that would make it much better. I would also like to see some more choices for restaurants and services. We patronize Sparky's next door. It's convenient for us because you can drop your car off while you're at work and they are great people that provide a great service.



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We're librarians, so we'd love to know, does reading enhance this job?

Reading is very important to my job. Reading is crucial to what we do here at WECEC every single day. At our school we teach the next generation how to read. We encourage reading every day. We've been honored by the Delaware Chamber of Commerce with an award for one of our reading programs called Book Bling. And we've also partnered with the library in the past for the summer reading program to give out charms for the kids reading necklaces. So we're very passionate about encouraging reading, and I think that the library and WECEC have a really good relationship.



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Our Pre-K students take trips to the library for story time and get to play on the playground by the library for a little change. We're close enough that we can do walking field trips and in the spring, our teachers take classes down to the library to hear about the summer reading program and do a kick off and kind of get kids excited about reading. At the end of the school year, we like to do activities that celebrate all the reading that was done throughout the year. We've had the state police come and do demonstrations with the dogs and with their K-9s and horses and we've had the Nature Preserve come and bring animals, and if the kids meet their goal, they get a special treat during the day.



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We're librarians, so we'd love to know, does reading enhance this job?

At the beginning of the year, we celebrate those that read over the summer. And then we kick off our reading goals for new school year, and especially focus on introducing our kindergarteners to the program. We have other programs we do like on Fridays we have flashlight reading where the kids use flashlights to track and read. We've partnered with communities and schools to bring dogs into the building so the kids can read to the dogs. I know you guys do that at the library too. The kids really love reading to the dogs and some of our struggling readers that are nervous to read to a teacher have no problems reading to a dog. So I would say that reading is at the forefront of everything that we're doing every single day here at WECEC.



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What are you reading and what formats do you prefer?

Alright, so this is an interesting question. Every night my wife and I will sit on the couch and she usually has a book that she's reading. I'm not a sit down and read a novel kind of reader. I am on my mobile device. So I'm an e-reader, I guess. I'm always reading news stories and journal articles. I get four or five emails a day from different education sites about effective principals and effective schools and things that people are doing in schools, so I spend a lot of time in the evening kind of reading those with the background noise of the television. When I get up in the morning, I usually read one educational article before I actually get you out of the bed and start my day.



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What are you reading and what formats do you prefer?

So I would say I'm an e-reader, and not necessarily a book reader. I do have one book on my nightstand that is a compilation of funny stories that a principal has written about the life of a principal. I've been reading that here and there and it kind of puts things in perspective, knowing someone else is going through the same kinds of situations.



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Do you have a favorite childhood book?

We like to do Read Across America in the spring here at WECEC, and I will volunteer to go into classrooms and read. We also have police officers, community members from Discover Bank, and board members, and people from Heritage Shores who will come in and read to our kids. It's a really great outpouring of support that we get from businesses in Greenwood, and even within our district that offer to come in to read to the kids so we really put it out there and take advantage of their willingness to come in.



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Do you have a favorite childhood book?

I like to read one of my favorite books from school, which was, "Miss Nelson is Missing." So Miss Nelson wasn't in school, and the kids really liked Miss Nelson, but they were taking advantage of her and so then Viola Swamp comes in as the substitute. It's really Miss Nelson all dressed up and the kids really don't like Viola so they're excited when Miss Nelson comes back and they mind their p's and q's. So that is probably one of my most memorable books from my childhood, I think from high school, "The Catcher in the Rye," was probably one of my favorite novels.



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What actor would play you in a movie?

It's a funny question. It has to be somebody really good looking. Somebody with a lot more hair than I have. I would probably say Matthew McConaughey. Plus he's a Commander's fan. I'm a Commander's fan, so probably Matthew McConaughey. I don't know if he's be able to pull off the baldness for me. But yeah, we'll go for the big, big star.



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If you were to write a memoir, what would the title be?

So that's a hard question. I'm not 100% sure what the title would be. I pride myself on building relationships with my staff and students and encouraging our staff to build relationships with their students and with the community. Because I think a key part of my success as an administrator is being able to have conversations with parents outside of school and to see them as humans. And then when you see them in school, the conversations are much easier when there are concerns with their children. So something like, "Relationship Builder." Or, "Someone Who Fosters a Love for Learning." I'm always encouraging the kids as well, and telling them that education is the key to whatever they want to do. It will unlock whatever they want it to unlock in the future.



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If you were to write a memoir, what would the title be?

Whether it's working here locally in the community, or going on to bigger things and places outside of Greenwood and Bridgeville. There's a lot to offer out in the world. We have students that graduated from Woodbridge that are going to the University of Kentucky and playing football. They're spreading their wings and seeing what's out here. If you want to choose to come back afterwards, we'd love to have you back in town, but go and see what's out there, and make the best of it. I've had former students that have come back to work for me. So it's interesting when it all comes full circle and you have kids of your former students that are working right here at WECEC. Everything's about the relationships that you make and the impact that you make on people.



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Do you have any ideas for how Greenwood could be a stronger and more connected community?

So from my perspective here at school, I feel like we are pretty well connected, because we've developed the relationships with some of those key people in the town. But I think those individuals continuing to be open to building relationships with new people and businesses coming into the community is key. Having a way to show new people all that our community and our school has to offer and having businesses work together is really important. The Greenwood Police do that on the Greenwood PD Night Out in August and it's a great thing. I think it's something that could probably be done two times a year, if others in the town want to foster that. When people come, they get a meal, but they also have free T-shirts and other give-aways and there is the opportunity for everyone to see all that our town and its businesses have to offer.
