

Ready For Freddie  
By Jacky Campbell

One day while visiting a friend at a hospital, I noticed a poster hanging in an elevator. I've never forgotten the picture and caption on it. A tractor was sitting idle in a field. The poster's simple message, "You can't plow a field by turning it over in your mind," made a lasting impression on my life and helped me determine the meaning of success. Success is failure turned inside out.

Success is knowing in my heart and soul that I've given my best. As a nontraditional student in college, new terms brought on new questions and revealed my ignorance. Waiting until test day to ask questions just didn't cut it.

The first night of computer class, my instructor kept saying, "You can't leave until I give you a syllabus." I had no clue what she was talking about. Teachers didn't talk like that 25 years ago when I was in high school. I assumed it was a type of punishment and decided I didn't want it. As she headed for the door, going to the office, I raised my hand and asked, "What's a syllabus?" Amidst the laughter of 30 students, I learned that a syllabus is an outline of material to be covered in class. What a relief! That "syllabus" experience became the cornerstone of my list of college successes.

Homework or test grades could have been better sometimes, but I treated them as major building blocks. Getting back Algebra homework with a note, "Dots too fat on graph," helped me do neater work and appreciate Math more. The dreaded Biology was difficult and didn't make sense. I studied and studied but never made an "A" in it. I enjoyed the teacher's attitude and style, so I focused on the good and did my best. I considered my "B" to be quite a success! I still have no idea what a pinecone's seed shelves are called, but I did learn that locomotion has nothing to do with locomotive trains!

Journalism and English Composition assignments helped me succeed in writing. I especially love sharing personal experiences, but whether researching a topic or reworking rough drafts, I learned that a 19-page rough draft was not what the instructor had in mind! I found myself in a most unusual position one day. I was asked to greet guests as they arrived at a symposium at our college, so I agreed not having the slightest idea what a symposium is or what goes on at such an event. Convinced in my mind that this is a concert of a small symphony orchestra, I wondered why no one brought musical instruments. On this occasion I didn't ask questions, so my ignorance remained sealed with silence and curiosity. When I learned they had come for a writing conference, I added "symposium" to my list.

Success is often little accomplishments and kindnesses shared. Believe me, encouraging words make positive differences. An example of this is Freddie, a first-grader who rides home on my schoolbus. Each day when he steps on the bus after his long day at school, he stops and says, "Hello, Mr. Busdriver!" With arms outstretched, he leans his head against my shoulder and gives me a hug! He shows me his crinkled, scribbled homework, which reminds me of my own when I was in first grade! I tell him it looks great and is proof he is learning and getting smarter! One day he showed me a loose tooth as blood dripped from his mouth before I could hand him a tissue. He knows he can also count on me when he has a runny nose. Something deep down inside me tells me I must be succeeding as a busdriver, at least through the big brown eyes of Freddie! He's on my Christmas list!

I want to be a teacher. Currently I have earned an Associate of Arts degree, not by sitting around thinking about it, but by putting feet on my desire to do it. My next goal is to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education so I may teach children how to grow in knowledge and become success stories themselves! Defining success never ends.