



February 7, 2020

Dear River Valley,

I really don't know why I became a teacher. Maybe because when I was 10 years old, I told my parents I was going to become a teacher, get rich, and buy them a color TV. When I was 12 we got a color TV, so I was off the hook for that purchase.

I never really liked school. I liked most of the people, but the school stuff just kind of got in the way of real living. I was a decent student. I was told I was a fun student to have in class, added a lot to the conversations that were and weren't part of the curriculum, and did the work I needed to do to get good grades. My teachers, as I am now reflecting back, were extremely patient intelligent people and did a great job of guiding me through the bowels of the educational system. I had good art teachers and two of them were about five feet tall. I am five feet tall and in my skewed way of thinking about a career path had the thought, "I could be an art teacher." Actually, I wanted to be a stewardess, but in the 70's there was a mandatory 5'2" height requirement. The curse of being five feet tall: too short to be a stewardess and too tall to get free beer on St Patrick's Day. However, I was tall enough to be an art teacher.

When my mom, who was the high school secretary, shared with my former teachers in the teachers' lounge that I had been accepted into the school of education at UW Eau Claire, she told me that there was uproarious laughter and one teacher even choked a bit on her sandwich. After hearing that, I had second thoughts about my career choice. Nevertheless, I forged on and graduated.

My road to landing a job after college was not how I had envisioned. After many interviews and an equal amount of rejections, there seemed to be a common theme in the 80's as to how one should inform a female that she did not get the job, and it was: "Thanks, but we really need a football coach." With no teaching job on the horizon, I continued my education by substitute teaching and waitressing second and third shift at a truck stop. Just when I was getting into the swing of working 16 hours a day at two different jobs and acquiring a taste for gravy on french fries, an art position opened up mid-year at River Valley and I interviewed. I thought I had lost this one too when the superintendent asked me why I wanted to work at River Valley and I said, "I really need health insurance."

When I shared that with my parents, my dad's loud response was, "%^&^*({})", Susan, that's not how you answer that question if you want a *&^&*&*& job." The man did not mince words. Fortunately, I was hired and my parents were ecstatic that I was moving out of their house.

Time has flown by and after 36.5 years of teaching at River Valley, I must admit that it has turned out to be a pretty good gig for me. All good things must come to an end and with that thought in mind, I have decided that at the close of the 2019-2020 school year, it is time for me to say, "Goodbye." Confucius said, "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life." Well, I worked hard. People in education work hard. And in a few months, I will be able to say, "I loved what I did, and I did what I loved." Lucky me.

I thank River Valley for taking a chance on me. I thank all of the staff (past and present) who I consider my mentors, my friends, and my heroes. Their unwavering commitment to public education and to the students of this District is surpassed by none. I thank the administration for giving me their support for my ideas and projects that always had the potential to be epic failures (some were) and for the guidance they have continually given me. I thank the School Board for caring about all stakeholders of the River Valley District. I thank the River Valley community for their continued belief in and support of the importance of the arts in education. I thank the parents for trusting me to be their children's teacher. Most of all, I thank the students for making every day exciting and different and important and rewarding.

I have always been proud to say, "I teach at River Valley." And that pride will never go away.

With utmost respect, "Quale Out."

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Carol Quale". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Susan Carol Quale