

## "Mr. Feeny's Secret"

I'd like to begin by thanking you for selecting me to speak to you today. It means a lot. As some of you may know, this is a big day for me, too, because I'm retiring at the end of the school year which makes this -- right here, right now -- the last lesson I will teach to high school students.

Who should I talk about -- Gandhi? MLK? Pope Francis? But finally, there was really only one possible topic -- Mr Feeny.

In case you've been under a rock for the last couple of years, Mr. Feeny is a teacher on a sitcom on The Disney Channel, *Boy Meets World*, who follows his students through school until they all finish together. But the parallels between me and Mr. Feeny don't stop there: we're both universally beloved; we're both devastatingly handsome; and by the time our students get done with us, we're both tired, broken old men.

I kid.

However, the fact is that I've done a bit of research on Mr. Feeny over the past few weeks, and I think I've uncovered the secret to why Mr. Feeny is such an effective teacher. It has to do with three characteristics:

#1: Mr. Feeny is tough but fair. He has high expectations for his students, but he makes them clear, and he doesn't ask them to do more than he has prepared them for.

#2: Mr. Feeny is formal but fun. He may address his students as Mr. or Ms., but at the same time, he's not afraid to "waste" class time with a silly joke (or the NPR puzzle once a week).

#3: Most important, Mr. Feeny obviously loves his students very much. He respects their dignity and treats them with kindness.

Which brings me to a story about my family. For those who may not know, I have a beautiful wife, Julie, and three wonderful sons, Walter, Jack and Charlie. It seems that when my second son Jack came home from hospital, #1 son Walter was understandably alarmed. He basically wanted to know, were we going to love him less? My wife, who is definitely the brains of the operation, told Walter, No, every time we bring home a new brother, we'll just *make more love*.

Now this might sound incredibly corny, but I'm convinced it really is the essence of Mr. Feeny's secret. From those lucky ones who dance across the stage at graduation to the less fortunate few who rather stumble toward greatness, Mr. Feeny always finds a way to *make more love*.

So let this be my last lesson for you as we prepare to enter the great, wide, wonderful world together: wherever you go, whomever you meet, I hope that you can always find a way to *make more love*.

And now, in the words of Mr Feeny: I love you all. Class dismissed.