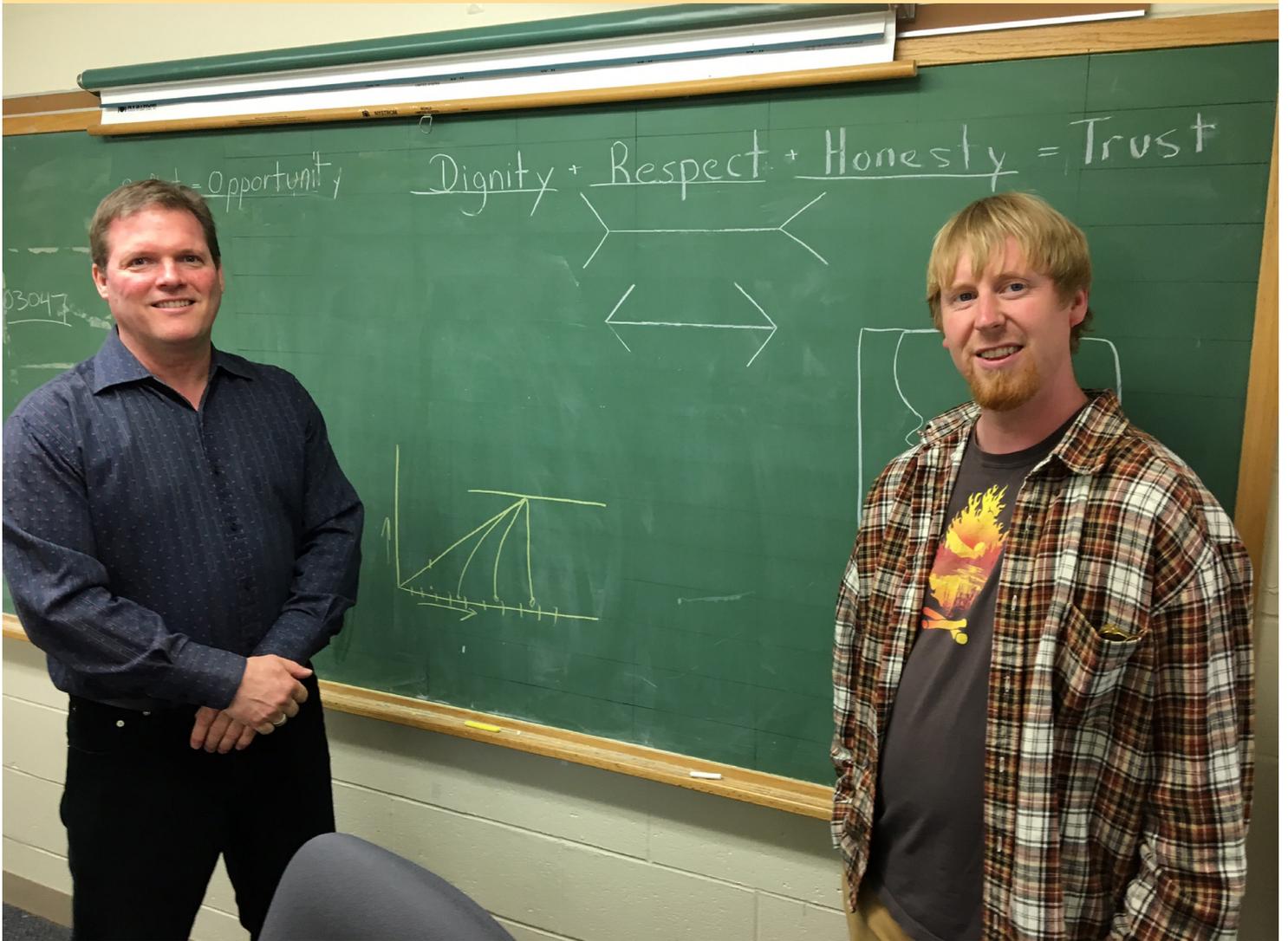




Teaching Tips and Strategies: The Art of Gentle Teaching, Part 1



Rob Varley and Jake Terry, Positive Behavior Support Trainers

Gentle Teaching is the common thread that ties Crotched Mountain School, its students, staff and teachers together. The core of this learning approach is building relationships of trust - of creating a two-way street where empathy and understanding flow in both directions.

Gentle Teaching is not a rigid set of rules - it is dynamic and personal, grounded in the belief that everyone, regardless of ability, yearn to be part of a valuing relationship.

When Rob Varley was a boy, he used to spend his Saturday afternoons working alongside his grandfather. Their task? To bring out the shine in his grandfather's sky blue Chevy Caprice convertible (with the leather interior). They would tag-team the job, baking in the hot sun, waxing on and waxing off until their fingers cramped and the sweat pooled at their feet.

It is one of Rob's fondest childhood memories.

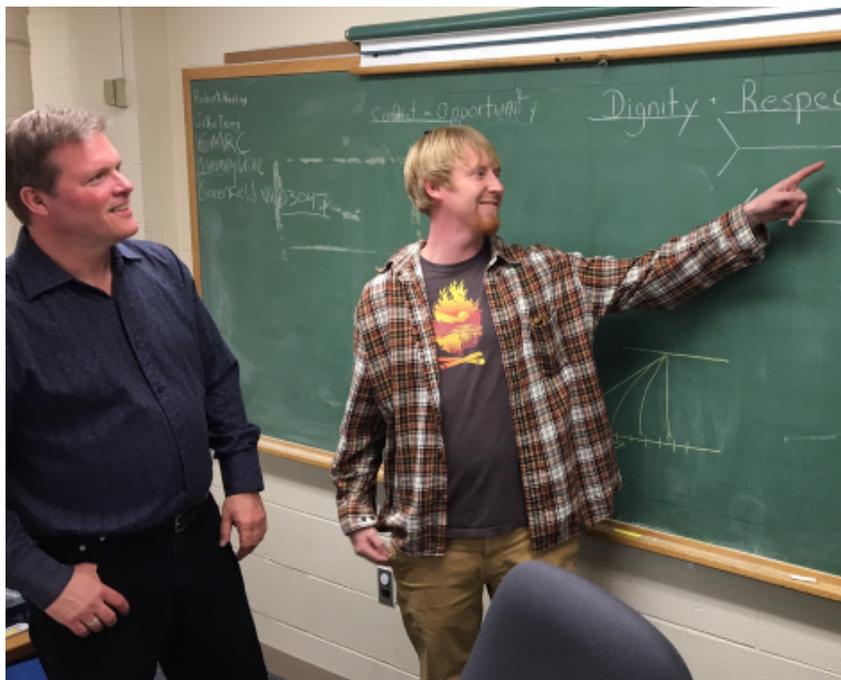
Waxing a car isn't by definition "fun," but the shared experience - the mutual value Rob and his grandfather found in a performing a task, together - easily overshadowed the mundane, everyday nature of the work.

This sense of partnership, of collaboration, of working in tandem to accomplish goals (no matter the size), is the crux of Gentle Teaching, the education philosophy that guides Crotched Mountain School.

"Gentle Teaching is about building relationships with people," Rob says. "If you create trust, then you make it easier to help people to be as independent as they possibly can."

Rob and his colleague Jake Terry are Positive Behavior Support Trainers. Their task is to hardwire the Gentle Teaching approach into the DNA of the school, to make it part of the educational culture for teachers, administrators, direct care staff and students.

"We don't focus on changing the behavior of the individual," Jake says. "We look at how we behave as staff, how we can make ourselves better teachers and what are we trying to communicate."



"We want to help people be as socially interdependent as possible," Rob says. "If you can build relationships with people, based on trust, it makes it easier to help them. We want our students to know they're heard and they're valued."

Gentle Teaching
is the
education philosophy
that guides
Crotched Mountain
School

The four pillars of Crotched Mountain School's Gentle Teaching approach are Safe, Fair, Fun and Mutually Valuing. In the next few months we'll go through them individually and show how these concepts work together to form the bedrock of our education philosophy and ultimately lead to a culture of compassion and success.

In upcoming issues, we will look at each of these four aspects of Gentle Teaching in-depth and show how they work together to create relationships of shared value and empathy and ultimately address even the most challenging of behaviors.

For more Teaching Tips and Strategies, visit www.cmf.org/tips



CROTCHED MOUNTAIN SCHOOL

David Etlinger, Director of Admissions
admissions@crotchedmountain.org / 603.547.3311, ext. 1894
1 Verney Drive, Greenfield, NH 03047 / cmf.org/school