

A 2004 Message from a Teacher
August 23, 2004

A letter from Dan Green, 6th Grade English Teacher, Marcus Whitman Middle School, Rushville, New York

"Students became believers and achievers, not doubters and pouters".

I never got to meet Fred Sarkis, the first time he visited our school. I was sick that day. Luckily someone gave me a copy of his book *Yes Pa*. I originally set it aside until I had some time to read it. Once I found time and started to read, I couldn't stop. This was more than a good book, this was a book with morals and values instilled within. This was a story with valuable life lessons.

The book *Yes Pa* is a chronicled autobiography of Fred's life, his struggles, his triumphs and most importantly his keys to success, real success not just monetary success. The book is also a historical account of Fred's 78 some years, so far. In his book *Yes Pa*, Fred Sarkis pours his heart out in an interesting and emotional way that touches the soul of everyone who reads it.

My students loved *Yes Pa* as well as the man behind the story. The more we read of the story, the more they wanted to read. They truly enjoyed reading about Fred's adventures, playing the same games that Fred did, seeing the cigar box that his baby sister slept in and typing on an old manual typewriter, just like Fred did. What a fitting end to the book, my students got to meet the man behind the story. He even came back to school at a later date to play dodge ball with them.

There are many valuable lessons to be learned from Fred and his book *Yes Pa*. Fred calls them his keys to success; hard work, a positive attitude, perseverance and a good education. Kids hear these same lessons from their parents and teachers, but Mr. Sarkis is real success story, right before their eyes. They see that these keys will open the doors to their futures.

As our class read *Yes Pa*, a transformation began. I noticed that overall the students were developing better behaviors and that more homework was being handed in. There was a definite decrease in negative attitudes and discipline problems. Students began encouraging each other, even saying, "If Fred can do it, so can you." They also reminded each other of the keys to success, keys that would work for them, right then and there. Students began to realize that they are in control of their own destiny. They saw that success is not luck, fate or chance. Students became believers and achievers, not doubters and pouters.

Yes Pa, is a book for everyone. Anyone can read it, anyone can enjoy it and anyone can learn from it. Fred's story is truly unique, yet is made of the same fabric as many of our lives. He touches every reader in a special way. I had students saying, "Wow, that thing that happened to Fred 70 years ago happened to me too." Parents commented that they had experienced similar situations with their parents. I even found myself comparing my life with Fred's. The effects of reading *Yes Pa* were profound. We had several students make the Merit Role, who never had. Several students made dramatic progress in getting homework in on time and completed. One student even did a report on Fred Sarkis as his "hero." All students agreed that the book was

fantastic and that they had learned valuable lessons that they would use to become successful throughout their lives.

Fred Sarkis doesn't need to share his story, his time and his life with anyone, but he does, because he cares about people...their struggles and their successes. Imagine what the world would be like if every successful businessperson cared and gave as much as Fred Sarkis.