

Foreword

A young man leaving his position as a high school English teacher recently completed his exit discussion with his principal. He said he entered the profession after achieving a reasonable level of academic proficiency in the area of language and literature. After teaching for two years, he still felt prepared to teach English but said he was leaving the profession because he did not feel prepared to teach students.

We all know teachers who successfully teach and inspire their students. In addition to their command of a subject matter area, they are generally known by the connections they make with their students and by the fact that they keep learning new ways to help their students achieve. More often than not, their students admire them, consistently learn from them and feel connected to them years after any formal relationship has ended.

We can all summon up memories of teachers who continue to guide us long after we leave them.

When I left the small town where I grew up and “went to college” at the State University of New York at Fredonia, educators such as Dr. Dawley and Dr. Bernstein inspired me and countless others to love history, learning and the art of citizenship. There was also the college president, Dr. Langford, whose near physical blindness never prevented him from seeing things and saying things with clarity and kindness, whether he was connecting with an aspiring undergraduate or a senior faculty leader.

As educators accountable for preparing men and women to become and remain accomplished teachers, we must focus our energies on strategies that promote teachers’ capabilities to help all children learn well, stay safe and graduate. At its base, effective teaching involves transforming possibilities into realities. Those who love to teach are able to turn possibility into reality, one child, one school, one community at a time.

It has been my experience that teachers are more likely to help their students learn if the teachers themselves feel they are valued members of a school community that supports and celebrates successful teaching and learning. We can facilitate their success by using the same expertise and optimism we expect them to bring to their students.

This book offers a valuable and practical framework for thinking about how to teach successfully—year after year, class after class, student after student. It contains many insights and lessons from teachers who have found their own professional experiences genuinely rewarding and who did remain in the profession for a lifetime.

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