

What Your Colleagues Are Saying . . .

Keep this book as a constant companion, reminder, and resource that fuels your passion for teaching. You'll find yourself jotting down notes in the margins and within the thought-provoking prompts, then returning to it time and again for invaluable guidance.

—**MaryAnn DeRosa**, Professor
Curriculum Design Relay GSE;
International Education Consultant

Prendergast and Lee draw on a wealth of practical experience to provide insights and practical recommendations for educator resilience. By focusing on habits, they identify micro-changes that can have significant impact when applied consistently. This book should be an encouragement to educators.

—**Jonathan Eckert**, Baylor University
Center for School Leadership
Author of *Just Teaching: Feedback, Engagement,
and Well-Being for Each Student*

Habits of Resilient Educators is an invaluable tool that serves as a guide, playbook, and journal for educators. Dr. Lindsay Prendergast and Piper Lee set out to support teachers in reclaiming their why, while sharing research-based, best-practice habits of pedagogy. The interactive component makes this book deeply engaging and meaningful, and sure to provide the reader much clarity and insight.

—**Abigail W. French**, CTE Pathway Coach
Frederick County Public Schools, VA

It is refreshing to read *Habits of Resilient Educators* to remind yourself of the reasons you chose a career in education. This read provides strategies to get through the day-to-day challenges found in dealing with the demands of working within a school system. It helps to bring you back to the reason you are in the classroom in the first place by setting up procedures and adjusting your mindset about what an effective educator needs to do daily to continue to find joy in this career.

—**Amanda S. Garman**, Principal
R. B. Hunt Elementary School

Habits of Resilient Educators is a timely and well-needed book that examines the essential habits that educators must model, embrace, and identify in themselves to provide necessary social and emotional support and modeling for students. No matter if you are a new teacher or a veteran teacher, this resource provides myriad strategies to combat the challenges we often face day-to-day in schools.

—**Brian Johnson**, Director of Learning
Design and Development

Teaching is complex, demanding, and challenging. Prendergast and Lee have not only crafted a collection of habits for teachers who have devoted their lives to giving back to their students and serving the education profession, but they have also extrapolated profound lessons based on their observations to help form healthy boundaries within the circles of this demanding profession.

—**Debra Lane**

Habits of Resilient Educators: Strategies for Thriving During Times of Anxiety, Doubt, and Constant Change by Dr. Lindsay Prendergast and Piper Lee is the ultimate lifeline for educators. This essential playbook, rich with practical, research-based strategies, equips seasoned and new educators to thrive amidst constant change. It's a must-have guide for reflective practitioners, mentors, and all educators navigating today's demanding educational landscape.

—**Ann Marie Luce**, Associate Director
Centennial Center for Leadership
Hobart and William Smith Colleges

Amidst overwhelming pressures in education, this book offers hope. Each chapter delves into a habit of resilience that can be explored in any sequence. Educators, from novice to veteran, will find strategies that empower them, helping them develop the inner strength and renewed energy necessary to positively impact their students.

—**Carla Meyrink**, Co-founder and
Director of The Community for Learning,
Santo Domingo, DR

The authors of *Habits of Resilient Educators* are trusted guides who—with authentic vignettes from the experiences of educators, reflection and planning opportunities, concrete examples, and important reframes that show us how to reconsider and check our assumptions—esteem the full personhood of educators. They hold knowledge and experience alongside empathy and hope during a time when this posture is particularly needed, and they invite readers on a growth journey that offers a vital blueprint for learning partnerships between educators and students.

—Afrika Afeni Mills, Author

*Open Windows, Open Minds: Developing Antiracist,
Pro-Human Students*

After reading this exhilarating text, I am better equipped as a leader to navigate a “Negative Nellie/Ned” and turn their negative energy into a contagious, positive mindset. Furthermore, as a building Principal, I am now more confident in working with my staff on building resilience, what it means to be resilient, and factors that contribute to an individual’s resilience. This text is a MUST READ for all new and veteran teachers and school administrators!

—Melissa Roehm, Principal

Las Vegas, NV

I highly recommend this book for mentors and mentees. It will minimize anxiety for novice teachers and help them maintain their balance and thrive in the classroom. *Habits of Resilient Educators* encourages teachers to intentionally focus on what works, reflect on ways to stay inspired, and prioritize next steps.

—Carol Pelletier Radford, Author,

*Teaching With Light: Ten Lessons for
Finding Wisdom, Balance and Inspiration, and
Founder*, <https://mentoringinaction.com/>

Habits of Resilient Educators

Strategies for Thriving During
Times of Anxiety, Doubt, and
Constant Change

Lindsay Prendergast

Piper Lee

Foreword by Jeffrey D. Wilhelm

A Joint Publication



Copyrighted Material, www.corwin.com. Not intended for distribution.

For promotional review or evaluation purposes only. Do not distribute, share, or upload to any large language model or data repository.

FOR INFORMATION:

Corwin
A SAGE Company
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320
(800) 233-9936
www.corwin.com

SAGE Publications Ltd.
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London EC1Y 1SP
United Kingdom

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
Unit No 323-333, Third Floor, F-Block
International Trade Tower Nehru Place
New Delhi 110 019
India

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.
18 Cross Street #10-10/11/12
China Square Central
Singapore 048423

Vice President and Editorial
Director: Monica Eckman
Executive Editor: Tori Mello Bachman
Associate Content Development
Editor: Sarah Ross
Editorial Assistant: Zachary Vann
Project Editor: Amy Schroller
Copy Editor: Karin Rathert
Typesetter: C&M Digitals (P) Ltd.
Cover Designer: Candice Harman
Marketing Manager: Margaret O'Connor

Copyright © 2024 by Corwin Press, Inc.

All rights reserved. Except as permitted by U.S. copyright law, no part of this work may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

When forms and sample documents appearing in this work are intended for reproduction, they will be marked as such. Reproduction of their use is authorized for educational use by educators, local school sites, and/or noncommercial or nonprofit entities that have purchased the book.

All third-party trademarks referenced or depicted herein are included solely for the purpose of illustration and are the property of their respective owners. Reference to these trademarks in no way indicates any relationship with, or endorsement by, the trademark owner.

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Prendergast, Lindsay, author. | Lee, Piper, author.

Title: Habits of resilient educators : strategies for thriving during times of anxiety, doubt, and constant change / Lindsay Prendergast, Piper Lee; foreword by Jeffrey D. Wilhelm.

Description: Thousand Oaks, California : Corwin | NWEA, [2024] | Series: Corwin teaching essentials | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2023046556 | ISBN 9781071919231 (paperback : acid-free paper) | ISBN 9781071932865 (epub) | ISBN 9781071932889 (epub) | ISBN 9781071932896 (pdf)

Subjects: LCSH: Motivation in education. | Reflective teaching. | Mindfulness (Psychology) | Resilience (Personality trait) | Habit. | Teachers—Psychology.

Classification: LCC LB1065 .P74 2024 | DDC 370.15/4—dc23/eng/20231201
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023046556>

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

24 25 26 27 28 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

DISCLAIMER: This book may direct you to access third-party content via Web links, QR codes, or other scannable technologies, which are provided for your reference by the author(s). Corwin makes no guarantee that such third-party content will be available for your use and encourages you to review the terms and conditions of such third-party content. Corwin takes no responsibility and assumes no liability for your use of any third-party content, nor does Corwin approve, sponsor, endorse, verify, or certify such third-party content.

Copyrighted Material, www.corwin.com. Not intended for distribution.

For promotional review or evaluation purposes only. Do not distribute, share, or upload to any large language model or data repository.

Contents

Foreword	xi
by Jeffrey D. Wilhelm	
Acknowledgments	xv
About the Authors	xvii
INTRODUCTION	1
1 CLARIFY YOUR WHY: PURPOSE AS A HABIT	9
WHY PURPOSE MATTERS	9
UNPACKING YOUR PURPOSE	11
CONNECT TO YOUR IMPACT ON A BROADER SCALE	14
HOW PURPOSE EVOLVES AND WHY IT MATTERS	16
ALIGNING YOUR PURPOSE TO EQUITABLE PRACTICES	19
EMPLOYING YOUR <i>WHY</i> IN THE CLASSROOM	22
GETTING YOUR GROOVE BACK: WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR <i>WHY</i> BECOMES FUZZY	25
2 COLLABORATE: DON'T ISOLATE!	29
WHY COLLABORATION IS IMPORTANT	30
SHARING OUR SUPERPOWERS WITH ONE ANOTHER	31
USING PEER-TO-PEER OBSERVATIONS FOR COLLABORATING	32
CREATING COLLABORATION IN CLASSROOMS	34
CREATING COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL-HOME CULTURES	37
SAMPLE GOAL-SETTING TEMPLATE	38
3 SET HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL	43
WHY HIGH EXPECTATIONS MATTER	43
HOW VERBAL LANGUAGE AFFECTS HIGH EXPECTATIONS	45
SAMPLE ACADEMIC IDENTITY CHART	46

	HOW NONVERBAL LANGUAGE AFFECTS HIGH EXPECTATIONS	47
	HOW HIGH EXPECTATIONS AFFECT LESSON PLANNING AND ANALYZING DATA	49
4	USE DATA TO DRIVE DECISIONS	55
	WHY DATA SHOULD GUIDE OUR DECISIONS	55
	MAKING DATA USE A HABIT	57
	GETTING TO KNOW THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF DATA	59
	HOW TO CHOOSE WHAT DATA TO COLLECT AND WHEN	60
	BUST BIASES WITH EVIDENCE, NOT ASSUMPTIONS	63
	COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY CYCLES	63
	GATHERING LEARNER CONTEXT AS A RESPONSIVE DATA PRACTICE	66
	ENGAGING STUDENTS IN COLLECTIVE LEARNING EVIDENCE	68
5	ESTABLISH PROCEDURES AND ROUTINES	73
	THE IMPORTANCE OF ROUTINES AND PROCEDURES	74
	ROUTINES INSTEAD OF RULES FOR EFFECTIVE, EQUITABLE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT	75
	BALANCING SHARED OWNERSHIP AND DIRECTIVES FOR PROCEDURES AND ROUTINES	77
	PROACTIVE PLANNING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL PROCEDURES AND ROUTINES	79
6	SET EFFICIENT GOALS	91
	WHY GOAL SETTING MATTERS	92
	THE IMPACT OF CLASSROOM GOALS	92
	GOAL SETTING AND PERSONALIZED LEARNING PLANS FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS	96
	PROVIDING FEEDBACK WHILE ASSESSING AND ANALYZING GOALS	101
7	GET AND USE FEEDBACK EFFECTIVELY	105
	THE IMPORTANCE OF FEEDBACK	105
	WHY WE MIGHT AVOID FEEDBACK	107

	HOW TO DEVELOP THE HABIT OF ASKING FOR FEEDBACK	108
	WHAT YOU ASK MATTERS	114
	RESOURCES FOR PUTTING FEEDBACK TO WORK	116
	STEPS FOR APPLYING NEW FEEDBACK	118
8	PRIORITIZE AMIDST A SEA OF INITIATIVES	121
	WHY PRIORITIZATION MATTERS	121
	WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A SKILLED PRIORITIZER	123
	HOW TO EFFECTIVELY PRIORITIZE TASKS	123
	ASSET-BASED THINKING AND DEFICIT-BASED THINKING CHART	126
	GETTING STARTED: BEGIN WITH WHAT MAKES SENSE	137
9	AVOID THE NEGATIVITY	141
	RECOGNIZING NEGATIVITY AND NAVIGATING PROFESSIONALLY	141
	NAVIGATING NEGATIVITY WITHIN YOUR TEAM THROUGH NORMS	143
	NAVIGATING NEGATIVITY IN THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE OR COMMON SHARED SPACES	145
	NAVIGATING ONE-ON-ONE CONVERSATIONS WITH NEGATIVE NELLIES AND NEDS	148
	NAVIGATING NEGATIVE NELLIES AND NEDS IN YOUR CLASSROOM	149
	NAVIGATING NEGATIVE NELLIE/NED PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS	151
	NAVIGATING NEGATIVE NELLIE/NED SELF-TALK	152
10	PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: RESILIENCE IS KEY	157
	RESILIENCE: MORE THAN JUST ACCEPTING INEVITABILITIES	158
	NAVIGATING THE NEW ERA OF TEACHING: CHANGE AS A CONSTANT	160
	APPLYING RESILIENCE IN THE CLASSROOM	162

LEVERAGING EFFECTIVE HABITS TO BECOME A RESILIENT EDUCATOR	163
BUILDING YOUR PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL	165
MAKE THE JOB YOU HAVE THE PROFESSION YOU LOVE	170
Epilogue	175
References	179
Index	183



Visit the *Habits of Resilient Educators* companion
website for downloadable resources.
resources.corwin.com/resilienteducators

Foreword

Teacher burnout is kind of like going broke: It happens gradually and then SUDDENLY. Here is the thing, though: If you burn out, it means that you were once on fire! Teaching is an intensely human endeavor. We deal with all of our students' needs AND the needs of parents, colleagues, and the community. Teaching is an endlessly enriching and enlivening pursuit that is also absolutely challenging, exhausting, and messy.

I tell my student teachers that joy and transformation are coming their way, so they need to learn to recognize these and celebrate them. But also coming their way are challenge and trouble. The questions are only how well they will prepare for the inevitable challenges, and how well will they respond.

I'm a passionate masters Nordic ski marathoner, and in our club's training room, there is a photo of the finish line of a World Cup Nordic ski race. The winner stands surrounded by seven other skiers who are all lying on the ground, visibly pained. Our coach has circled the standing victor and written in red marker: BE THIS SKIER! Through all the vagaries of teaching, that's what I want for all the teachers with whom I work: to be THAT teacher—the one who stands tall and strong amongst the slings and arrows. To achieve this, we need ritual structures and practices to help us pay mindful attention and develop equanimity and resilience. This book provides just such structures and rituals.

The book you hold in your hands is a great-hearted and generous book that provides the practices that will help you to achieve mindful, healthy, balanced wellness and thriving as a teacher over time. I'm currently entering my forty-first year of teaching (you can do the math). As I read this book, I recognized many of the habits that I have embraced throughout my career to thrive for this long—and learned many new ones that I now embrace. Fifty years, here I come!

In the *Tassajara Bread Book*, Edward Brown writes of how as the baker at a Buddhist retreat, he was always dissatisfied with the biscuits he made. When he told his teacher that he never felt that his biscuits were quite right, his teacher asked, Compared to what? Brown realized that growing up he had only ever made

Pillsbury biscuits, the kind in the paper can that you crack open and the biscuits spill out perfectly formed onto your baking sheet. But to make biscuits from scratch is another matter involving many messy bowls and broken eggs and will result in some good old home-baked biscuits that can be fantastically tasty and flaky—or epic fails. The story illustrates many of the central points of this book: that impossible standards are harmful, that we all need to embrace the mess that brings us the real biscuit, that “perfection” is the enemy of the good, and that there is no perfect teacher so to be “good enough,” as the psychologist D. W. Winnicott argues, is the healthiest goal and way to parent and teach.

This theme reminds me of Tom Newkirk’s call to dismantle the myth of the superteacher; instead, give us stories of teachers who thrive in the turmoil, and show how they do it. (I love this book for this message alone.) But most of all, be your best possible and necessarily imperfect self in these wonderful and impossibly messy worlds of the classroom, school, and life. To achieve this, like any endurance athlete (and teachers are endurance athletes!), you must prepare, find supportive training and thinking partners, monitor your energy and fitness, know when to take breaks, and rehearse and refine your responses to challenges. In short, know how to “feed your legs” with routines that keep you nourished, rested, and strong.

When I finished reading this helpful book, I felt refreshed and forward looking, much like I feel after a long mindfulness meditation. Let me explain: In Buddhism, the central tenet is *metta*, often translated as loving kindness or friendliness. The first loving kindness must be to the self and with the recognition of the self’s connection to all else. Self-care is essential to care for others. Loving kindness is contagious—if you care for yourself, respectfully and reflectively in the way this book suggests and supports you to do, it will spread to your students and colleagues. One of the Perfections in Buddhist teaching is “joyful effort.” This generosity and joyful effort is evident in us as we teach well and in our students when they are engaged. Teaching strikes me as being very similar to parenting—impossibly joyful, with endless challenges and trouble, but worth it all and requiring joyful effort as we change diapers or deal with recalcitrant teens. As one Buddhist dharma has it, washing the dishes and carrying water is also your practice! The human heart, if you care for it, can have an endless capacity to love and to teach— which are much the same thing, I think. But it must be cared for.

As a teacher, you have many responsibilities. What I love about this book is that it teaches what you need to do to be responsible

for your own heart, your own health, your own energy, attitude and response, and therefore for your own thriving—all of which is pre-requisite to doing the noble work of teaching. I know that like me, you will appreciate the thinking partnership and guidance this book provides to support us on our journeys as teachers.

—Jeffrey D. Wilhelm

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, this book is built upon the stories of countless wonderful, willing, and ever-inspiring teachers and leaders with whom we have worked. While there aren't enough pages to name them all, the lessons shared would not have been possible without their engagement with us as we attempted to support their work to reach all students. The leadership of our organization NWEA then provided us the moral and professional support to launch this project and accomplish this goal with the full backing of their tremendous resources. From brainstorming ideas, to peer edits, to constructive feedback, and also with a constant stream of encouragement, we share endless gratitude for fellow Corwin authors Dr. Chase Nordengren and Fenesha Hubbard, Robyn Sturgeon, Jacob Bruno, Dr. Erin Beard, Lindsay Deacon, and Kenny McKee.

And finally, we are both immeasurably grateful to our families for their endless and unwavering support. From the wordsmithing guidance of Lindsay's mother to Piper's patient children who held her accountable for deadlines and Lindsay's husband who constantly encouraged and supported, the pages before you are as much their sacrifices as ours.

PUBLISHER'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Corwin gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the following reviewers:

Nicole Bell
Numeracy Consultant, Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial
Nova Scotia, Canada

Becky Evans
Educator, Lincoln Public Schools
Lincoln, NE

Oliver Woollett
Educator, St Leonard's College
Melbourne, Australia

About the Authors



Lindsay Prendergast has served schools and districts across the globe for nearly two decades as a leadership coach, consultant, principal, counselor, and teacher. She holds a master's degree in education administration from Colorado Western State University and a doctorate of education in education leadership from Wilkes University. Dr. Prendergast currently serves as Assistant Director of Learning Experiences for The Danielson Group

(Framework for Teaching). While spending several post-pandemic years directly supporting nearly 30 principals as a leadership coach alongside Piper Lee, Lindsay spent hundreds of hours in classrooms observing teachers. These experiences, coupled with her expertise in instructional leadership and coaching, greatly informed the purpose of and need for this book. Lindsay enjoys advocating for educators by writing and speaking around the world for organizations such as ASCD, Learning Forward, Edutopia, AMLE, and others around instructional leadership grounded in student-centered schools where teachers thrive.



Piper Lee has more than twenty-five years of experience in education, including teaching, administration, instructional coaching, professional learning facilitation, and leadership coaching. Her passion for student and adult learning and improving effective teacher instruction and student success in learning ignited her pursuit of working as an instructional leadership coach nationally. Over the course of her career, Piper has served students,

families, teachers, leadership teams, and undergraduate and graduate students. Most recently, Piper has been supporting district leaders, principals, and educators in one of the largest school districts in the country. While partnering with educators across the country, Piper has learned and lives the philosophy that rigorous relationships help to create transformative schools and impact every aspect of our lives. Piper received her bachelor of arts degree in Elementary Education, her master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction, and her education leadership certification and licensure from Winona State University in Minnesota.

Introduction



WHY THIS BOOK? WHY YOU?

In a contemporary teaching environment filled with stresses imposed by a generational pandemic, the already complex work of teaching has become even more challenging. Teachers today are faced with regular, unpredictable interruptions to learning, increasingly emotional demands from parents and caretakers, greater intervention by policymakers into curriculum and instruction, and an overall climate that cultivates fear, uncertainty, and doubt (FUD)—three psychological stressors known to spread false information and lead to apathy and burnout.

During a time when many educators are leaving the profession, others have rolled up their sleeves and are shining brightly through the challenges and pressures of the tumultuous education landscape. Countless others are just entering the field, eager to contribute and make an impact on the lives of their students. So we asked the question: What do teachers need to know and understand about the intersection of professional and personal practices to foster their own wellbeing while providing utmost effective teaching and learning in the classroom?

This book endeavors to present practices that meet the modern educator where they are: employed in a field at the intersection of mundanity and sainthood. The chapters ahead will guide you to examine research-proven teaching pedagogy and draw connections to how those practices, when implemented routinely within structures so that they become habits, can become optimal effective and efficient patterns in your professional life.

This book draws on our direct experience of more than forty combined years working in schools and districts. Most recently working as coaches alongside teachers and leaders around the globe, we observed firsthand how educators navigated making this new learning environment work for them. Throughout these pages, we draw on stories of resilience and clever adaptation to understand what being a high-functioning educator looks like in the twenty-first century and beyond. Combining these stories with a robust body of research on the habits of effective

teaching and leadership, this book offers a rigorous and uplifting view of the difference educators can make even among all the contemporary stressors prevalent in schools.

Across the country, there is a sense of hopelessness around the ability to change this culture of chaos, and schools may struggle to find teachers for years to come. We must shift the narrative. Teaching can and should be a joyful profession where practitioners feel a sense of pride and accomplishment in their work. As a team of eternal optimists with deep experience and endless admiration for teachers, we aim to empower new and aspiring educators—or those with years of experience whose hope has waned—with a framework that enables them to regain control of their mindset and their practice despite the multitude of factors outside their control that they encounter daily.

THE INTERSECTION OF TEACHER AND STUDENT WELLBEING: WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

Education researcher John Hattie points to collective efficacy as one of the most impactful influences on student outcomes and the most consistently influential factor within teachers' control. Teacher collective efficacy is the belief held by teachers that they can make an impact on student performance (Goddard et al., 2020). This construct links to the broader observation of sociocultural theory, that we all have a broad network of influences that encourage or discourage us from believing in our ability to affect change. The habits of effective teaching described here all focus on creating a positive and supportive network of influences that can enable those beliefs for individual teachers and support them in creating that social context for their peers. In this way, we hope to show these habits aren't "life hacks" capable of solving any problem but small practices that collectively create a context within which teachers can grow and develop their own self-efficacy. This book will articulate strategies and practices that will support not only the preservation of teacher collective efficacy but ensure that it thrives.

Extending the importance of teacher self- and collective efficacy, research suggests that it also positively influences students' academic adjustment, overall job satisfaction for teachers, and even classroom quality. For example, studies have found that teacher self-efficacy may have a reciprocal effect on both teachers' and students' feelings of wellbeing and personal accomplishment (Bandura, 1997; Goddard et al., 2004). As you develop your own expertise and cultivate your

wellbeing simultaneously, you are likely to extend the positive impacts of your efforts to the classroom environment and thus to your students. Teachers are more likely to experience high self-efficacy when they routinely practice self-regulation strategies—such as seeking help or support, setting goals, orienting their work toward mastery, or engaging in personal learning (Zee & Koomen, 2016). Bandura (1997) emphasized the crucial importance of teachers’ beliefs that they have the skills and capabilities to selectively support their students where needed. The chapters within this book offer an opportunity to cultivate habits of behavior that build confidence by internalizing the thinking skills and high-frequency actions of teachers, such as making effective decisions or organizing immense amounts of complex information. In turn, teachers will be empowered to feel confident and capable of navigating any challenge they are faced with no matter the chaos of their surroundings or the uncertainty of what new challenges they’ll face in the classroom tomorrow. The figure that follows shows the habits that resilient educators embody.

FIGURE 0.1



HOW YOUR HABITS INFLUENCE YOUR IMPACT AS AN EDUCATOR

When you think of habits, perhaps you think of actions related to your personal life—managing your finances, exercising regularly, or perhaps even daily functions—such as always putting your car keys in the same place when you arrive home. Merriam-Webster (2023) defines a habit as, “a behavior pattern acquired by frequent repetition that shows itself in regularity or increased facility of performance.” A habit must be acquired, indicating that to develop new habits we must be intentional about their development. Author Clear (2018) describes habits as “the compound interest of self-improvement” in his bestseller *Atomic Habits*, and it is upon this premise that we encourage you to approach your learning with this book. When you purposefully engage in the repetitive practice of behaviors or skills that have proven to have a positive impact on your wellbeing and on the learning outcomes of your students, they become seamless and so easy to implement that they cease to require much thought or precious energy. When these habits—a blend of personal behaviors applied to professional strategies—become automatic, they enable teachers to exert focus and effort on far more important and cognitively demanding priorities—such as the assessment of student learning. Embedding habits framed in these chapters—such as effective decision-making, avoiding negative influences, or cultivating mental resilience—provides the foundation upon which you can then easily overcome uncertainty and withstand constant ambiguity.

Further, habits are a catalyst for continuously improving your craft as a teacher and feeling confident and in control of your life. When the process of practicing new skills becomes less exciting or perhaps even boring, you’ll know the novelty has dissipated; but this is a crucial time to persist. The intent is for these skills to become so easy and fluid that they are nearly mindless. When you cease to feel as though you are doing something unique or novel, it’s time to celebrate a win—you’ve likely developed a new habit! Though perhaps seemingly minor, collectively developing the habits within these chapters will lead you toward mastery of an entire series of expert practices that will enable you to artfully navigate even the most cataclysmic changes to the school environment or field of education, as if you were effortlessly sailing along on a smooth sea.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Whether you are reading this book independently or with the support of fellow educators around you, the chapters within are each an entry point into a multitude of opportunities to apply

and practice the habit that you are examining. They are meant to be experienced in daily practice in order to fully immerse yourself in your personal understanding of what aspects of each habit yield the utmost outcomes for your growth as an educator.

In Chapter 1, you will examine how purpose connects to educator wellbeing and recognize where learning to develop the habit of returning to your *why* as an educator is critical to sustaining fulfillment and success in a career that possesses some of the highest rates of burnout.

Chapter 2 takes you on a journey through the unique merits of collaborating with others to understand not only why educators can elevate their impact by working together but how specific practices are proven to ensure collaboration moves beyond simply sharing work responsibilities.

In Chapter 3, we begin unpacking the habit of establishing and upholding high expectations for all students. By examining the influences of bias, for example, you will learn not only where to focus your efforts but how to do so in a consistent and intentional manner so that instruction is equitable for every student.

Chapter 4 explores the ever-important habit of utilizing data to drive decisions in the classroom. We will lift out straightforward, high-impact practices and streamline data processes to help you ensure your efforts to set high expectations for all students, for example, are utmost effective.

In Chapter 5, you will learn to apply the habit of utilizing routines and procedures across all areas of your teaching practice. In doing so, you set the stage to maximize effective use of your time and create opportunities for applying the remaining habits learned in the book.

Chapter 6 will begin bringing all of your newly developed habits from earlier chapters into the art of setting goals for your long-range personal and professional development. You'll recognize strategies for applying goal setting for both you and your students that ensure success for all.

In Chapter 7, you will spend time reflecting on your growth thus far through a focus on feedback. You will also learn how to seek and apply various sources of input and accelerate your growth journey.

If your learning around each habit thus far has you feeling daunted at the prospect of mastering them all, Chapter 8 will

help you filter your learning and organize your efforts through the art of prioritization. You'll learn how to declutter both personal demands and professional ones.

As the book is situated to support you in navigating the new “normal” of education—constant fear, uncertainty, and doubt—Chapter 9 presents skills around the habit of avoiding negativity. You'll examine how to identify root causes of negative influences and apply skills in navigating them effectively so you may not only survive but thrive.

Chapter 10 concludes the book with the habit of developing and applying resilience. As a key factor to ensuring happiness, satisfaction, and fulfillment in your career as an educator, these final practices offer opportunities for application across each of the other habits in the book.

As you consider the content of the book, you'll recognize connections across each chapter that may compel you to return to the first chapter on “Clarify Your Why” for reflection opportunities even when you are deep into nearly the last chapter on “Prioritizing Amidst a Sea of Initiatives.” Let the learning progression evolve organically for you—no need to proceed methodically from one chapter to the next unless that best suits your interest! For maximum effect, step away from reading the chapter pages to put the strategies into practice in your classroom or office. Then, return to reflect on the experience and delve into the next activity for even deeper learning about the chapter's habit of focus.

TAKE YOURSELF ON A PERSONAL GROWTH JOURNEY

If you find yourself reading this book on your own, consider it your new companion to lead you toward the exciting goal of thriving, not just surviving, as an educator. Test your confidence, expand your imagination, and challenge conventional wisdom around how teachers are expected to mindlessly function under exorbitant levels of stress for the duration of their career. You'll engage in research-proven practices that help you organize your time, streamline your efficiency, and maximize your impact on student learning outcomes. Leverage the activities in the “Setting Goals” chapter, for example, as you practice new skills in utilizing data to drive your decision-making processes from Chapters 3 and 8, and become a master of propelling your own learning as well as your students' learning.

COLLABORATE WITH A MENTOR, COACH, PLC, OR COHORT

The content of this book lends itself well to application in a setting with the perspective and expertise of fellow educators around you. Whether you are working through the chapters in an induction program, reading the book with a professional learning community (PLC) in your school or district, or teaming up with a mentor to support your learning, it's important to situate your approach with a mindset of collaboration and a focus on growth. Despite the tremendous expertise you certainly bring with you to the learning journey, be ready to set aside assumptions and preconceived ideas about your ability to become even better. To create new habits or routines in your practice, you'll likely need to disrupt existing patterns and beliefs, and that can be challenging or even uncomfortable. We recommend setting learning intentions each time you engage in reading a new chapter or collaborating with others around what you are learning. Prioritize being open, receptive, and curious, and you will maximize the impact of your learning journey for yourself and for your students!



REFLECTION

**Get Ready, Set Your Intentions, and
Go Improve!**

**MY LEARNING INTENTIONS FOR READING
THIS BOOK ARE ...**

1.

2.

3.

CHAPTER 1

Clarify Your Why Purpose as a Habit



Abby, a middle school social studies teacher, has been managing her teaching career, single motherhood, a new school, and multiple community traumas ever since the COVID-19 global pandemic shifted everything in March of 2020. The challenges have often felt insurmountable, so much so she felt her passion for teaching waning at times, and she had never imagined this to be a possibility. As the school year progressed, revisiting her purpose as an educator helped mitigate frustrations. Feeling particularly overwhelmed on a Sunday evening and thinking of ALL the expectations for the new week, Abby developed a simple meditation: Remembering how easily my emotions and attitude can impact or transfer to my students, I choose a mindset centered in compassion and empathy. I will meet people where they are, honoring who they are and what they need. That is my purpose.

WHY PURPOSE MATTERS

In a workplace environment, professionals are considered fortunate if they spend their career engaged in work that aligns with their personal values. In education, however, there exists an underlying assumption that teachers are inherently devoted to a higher calling—to a purpose that serves a noble, greater good. True, education is a field that is rich with the opportunity to make an impact on the lives of individuals or even society, and thus teachers experience the rewards of serving others. In fact, teaching is regularly listed in the top tiers of most rewarding jobs in the world (Intuit, 2022). Yet teachers may find themselves conflicted upon encountering unforeseen challenges or impediments to their ability to achieve the goal of

making a difference for every child. This can be disheartening or perplexing. Thus, it's important to understand the distinction between a purpose placed on your shoulders by outside entities and one you derive for yourself and that is aligned to who *you* are.

This chapter explores purpose as a journey, not a fixed focal point. Purpose, as it relates to the profession of teaching, does not always lead to feeling excited about the daily work at hand in the classroom, nor is it a cure for burnout. There are benefits to examining and embracing purpose that will contribute to such outcomes, yes. In fact, research highlights the powerful value of identifying your purpose as having a positive impact on your wellbeing, your motivation, and even your sense of agency (Schaefer et al., 2013; Vos & Vitali, 2018). However, finding fulfillment as an educator connects more directly to recognizing your capacity to have a direct and positive impact on others and then aligning your daily actions and decisions to your unique, personal purpose. By prioritizing the explicit purpose you aspire to achieve—embedding social-emotional learning into all academic curriculum, for example, or elevating society's respect for teachers on a broad level—you serve yourself as well as the greater good. This becomes a habit, a form of routine, through which we consistently approach our work. Whether planning instruction, evaluating student learning, or collaborating with colleagues, we move toward this goal by grounding our efforts in the response to this singular question: *Why?*

PURPOSE IS . . .	PURPOSE IS NOT . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grounded in your personal beliefs, values, and needs • A source of motivation when challenges arise or obstacles occur • Something that may evolve over time based on new experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determined by others around you • Always easy to identify or strongly evident • An objective to be accomplished

Finding fulfillment as an educator connects more directly to recognizing your capacity to have a direct and positive impact on others and then aligning your daily actions and decisions to your unique, personal purpose.

A theme you will hear resonate throughout this book is this: Teaching is complex, demanding, and challenging. It is not for the faint of heart. Further, the distance between what teaching is perceived to encompass by those outside the profession (yes, also those aspiring to become teachers) and the reality of a teacher's

daily experience is vast. Those arriving in the profession without an existing conviction that it is exactly what they always dreamt of doing may find themselves apprehensive about the future. Perhaps you once felt a strong grasp of your goal to contribute to the betterment of others through becoming a teacher and are overwhelmed by the volatile environment surrounding education today. Or you may be reading this, blissfully existing in teacher-Nirvana and wondering, “What’s the big deal about *why*?” No matter the reason, there will be something here for you.

Purpose connects deeply to our ability to embrace our value as an educator; to persist in the face of challenging circumstances, of which there are many; and to give our utmost best to the students in our care. Answering the question *why*? is more acutely personal than it may appear. Educators are susceptible to external perspectives around why you teach. Society tells the world that you are noble servants, yet sometimes the job is frustrating, boring, anxiety-inducing, or even sad. So what do you do when society doesn’t accept that you don’t love your job as a teacher or when you are asked to project something different than you feel or believe? The answer is to lean into purpose. *Your* purpose.

UNPACKING YOUR PURPOSE

At some point in the process of finding a job as a teacher, you were probably asked, “What excites you about teaching?” to dig into your intrinsic motivation for teaching. There is a high likelihood that teaching will be rewarding both for you, the teacher, and for the hundreds of students you will encounter over the years. However, there will come a time—or many times—when faced with the complexities and demands of the daily work, not to mention the myriad societal problems that teachers encounter within a classroom and are ill-equipped to resolve, that you’ll have a different question: Is it worth it? When teachers find their original purpose at odds with their ability to withstand the systemic challenges of the work, they may feel powerless, defeated, or hopeless.

For the first eight years of her teaching career, Erin primarily taught secondary English language arts classes—Grades 7, 8, and 9. She felt the tensions between her love of learning and the arts (including language arts) clash with the pressure of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation plus other accountability expectations.

(Continued)



(Continued)

Too often, external pressures felt like they ate up what she found to be her higher purpose: supporting students to grow a lifelong love of learning and creating. To navigate out of that paralyzing tension, she learned how she and her students could still meet the expectations while also attaining a higher purpose. For example, she learned how to closely read the content standards and the standardized test blueprints to look for project-based ways to attain those expectations while also cultivating joy, curiosity, and whole-human growth (not just academic achievement). Erin and her students were much happier and successful when she learned how to look at the expectations in this way.

The antidotes to futility, defeat, or hopelessness are power (the kind where you control your own destiny, not the lives of others!), accomplishment, and inspiration. To zero in on something that gives you purpose, begin by identifying ways that you can spend your time that you believe are important. Begin by asking yourself the following question: What makes me feel that my talents are benefiting the world? Use the boxes that follow to brainstorm the ways you have (or ways you can in the future) dedicated your efforts that may provide value to you or to others.

EXAMPLE: MENTORING NEW TEACHERS	EXAMPLE: IMPROVING THE CAMPUS GARDEN			

Now, examine the underlying purpose behind some of those activities. Take note: Some of those activities are perfunctory in purpose and that's OK. Not every single work-related task carries the connection to purpose; some things are mandated or simply operational in nature. Let's look a bit closer, though, at those that strike you as personally meaningful or related to an area where you know you are using your particular talents. For example, consider that an activity you listed in the matrix was "designing the common assessments used by your department/grade level." Now use these questions to unpack the underlying impact such an action could have.



REFLECTION

WHY do you believe this is important?

WHO is impacted, or benefits, by this?

HOW are each of those individuals or groups impacted?

WHAT happens if this is not done?

(Continued)

(Continued)

WHAT skill(s) do you possess that enables you to accomplish this?

WHAT are the emotions you experience by engaging in this action?

WHAT makes you uniquely suited to accomplish this?

By examining the greater implications of even a seemingly mundane action, you will begin to see the reason you pursue it. It's easy to dismiss our actions as always being "just part of the job" or "my boss told me it was required" when, in fact, there are likely countless things you do without being asked. In this example, the impact you believe your expertise could influence is *ensuring every student receives a rigorous, fair, and equitable chance to achieve high-learning outcomes*. This is an impact that supersedes a benevolent effort to do work that is required so that other colleagues can have more free time. This is an impact that may reflect or reveal a purpose to which you can more intentionally align with other areas of your practice. As a result, your work becomes more meaningful and connected to your own personal journey toward finding value in the daily work at hand.

CONNECT TO YOUR IMPACT ON A BROADER SCALE

When you are able to directly see or feel the effect of your efforts in the classroom, your motivation naturally increases. That said, there are countless days when you may not experience

the reward of knowing you had an impact. Zeroing in on what you want your impact to be can mitigate the risk of burnout and increase hopefulness.

Earlier, you practiced determining your purpose as a teacher. Purpose, however, without a plan for enabling it to guide your journey is likely to land you right where you started: apprehensive and uncertain about the future. By applying backward planning strategies, you can identify an explicit outcome of fulfilling your purpose: impact.

How is your purpose connected to the impact you aspire to make as an educator? Refer to the notes you took in the previous brainstorm boxes and the reflection questions that follow to map your personal impact aspirations.

CONNECTION

In Chapter 6, you'll learn about goal setting practices, which also support your purpose.



REFLECTION

Who has had an impact on me?

On whom do I wish to have an impact?

What actions can I take in the next five years to ensure I achieve this impact?

Connect your impact plan to your classroom. Imagine you could only teach ONE lesson to your students! Complete the following prompts:



REFLECTION

What impact would you want that lesson to have on the lives of your students?

What would that lesson be (it may or may not be related to the content or subject you typically teach)?

How would you know if your lesson had the impact you intended?

What step(s) can you take beginning right now to infuse your teaching practice with the impact you aspire to have on your students?

HOW PURPOSE EVOLVES AND WHY IT MATTERS

Teachers enter the profession for a multitude of reasons and at diverse points in their working life. You may have followed a spouse to a new community and found the school district was

hiring through an alternative-licensure program, or perhaps you knew you would be a teacher from a very young age. No matter the origin, your purpose for becoming a teacher—for a job, as a career path, or to follow a higher calling—also offers unique insights into how you approach the work and ways that you may leverage your beliefs to feel the most satisfied and rewarded over time.

Consider the uniquely meaningful—and valid—purpose that an educator may identify depending on how they view the day-to-day work.

	PURPOSE	STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES
<i>Teaching as a job</i>	Engaged in the work for the purpose of necessity in order to support their personal needs or a household Finds high value in work benefits, such as schedule or calendar	Better able to set boundaries around their work and professional life Less susceptible to emotional turbulence from job-related stress	Risk of being perceived as less committed to the school or students
<i>Teaching as a career</i>	Engaged in the work for the purpose of growth and development of skills and relationships	Sees growth opportunities within challenges Engages in all aspects of the school community as a participant or leader	May become disillusioned with the work if not receiving personal rewards, such as promotions or accomplishments
<i>Teaching as a calling</i>	Engaged in the work to participate in serving a societal improvement effort (alleviating generational poverty, eliminating illiteracy, etc.)	Feels high levels of excitement and passion for the job despite challenges and demands	At risk for over-sacrificing personal wellbeing to complete work May inadvertently impose beliefs and expectations on students or colleagues (martyr behavior)

It's incredibly important to understand that the purpose you originally developed upon entering the field of teaching may evolve over time. More accurately understanding your beliefs about the purpose of your work at different junctures of your career bolsters your ability to withstand the threats you will encounter to always finding teaching to be a fulfilling, rewarding profession.

Understanding your beliefs about the purpose of your work at different junctures of your career bolsters your ability to withstand the threats you will encounter to always finding teaching to be a fulfilling, rewarding profession.

Teaching is a profession that is often attractive to those who value helping or serving others, so it is important for teachers to recognize the ways in which a benevolent personality-type can be more susceptible to discouragement, stress, or even being taken advantage of. Just as research suggests that teaching is one of the most rewarding professions in the world (Intuit, 2022), other studies—even many prior the COVID-19 pandemic—highlight that teaching is one of the most stressful occupations, with comparisons to emergency room doctors, among others (Greenberg et al., 2017). If a teacher doesn't believe they should sacrifice their personal wellbeing for the benefit of their students, they may be susceptible to feelings of guilt resulting from societal pressures and perceptions around teaching as a “calling.” Guilt can dissolve personal boundaries and lead teachers to overwork to meet the unrelenting demands of the job—and ultimately to burnout, dissatisfaction, or hopelessness.

CONNECTION

You'll learn strategies for resisting the pull of negative attitudes and perceptions in Chapter 9.

- Because society perpetuates the perception of teachers as selfless souls, there are ample external pressures that may influence your belief that any one of these purposes—job, career, or calling—is superior to the other. As Dampf (2022) shares in *It's About Skillsets and Support, Not Sainthood*, “‘passionate’ teaching is not the same as skillful teaching, and our love of the saint obscures our view of the skill.” As a professional educator, acknowledging your belief about why you do the work each and every day creates the opportunity to maximize your strengths and mitigate your limitations to preserve your utmost precious commodity: your efficacy.

Use the questions that follow to reflect on your purpose.



REFLECTION

Which of the purposes (job, career, or calling) did you most closely align with when you began your work as a teacher? Is it the same today as you read this book?

What factors may have influenced the presence or absence of any changes?


ALIGNING YOUR PURPOSE TO EQUITABLE PRACTICES

Identifying and embracing your purpose as a teacher presents a rich opportunity to recognize that you are capable and competent and that you provide a critically valuable service to other people. However, there is a delicate balance between serving others with our talents and failing to recognize that our students and colleagues bring ample skills and understandings of their own to the relationship. When we engage in helping others, it's important to understand we are not morally or socially superior to those we serve, nor are we in this position to “fix” our students or colleagues, as this can have harmful effects on those we are helping. For example, research suggests a savior complex can inadvertently prevent the recipient of support or assistance from developing their independence and command of skills (Aronson, 2017). Further, to fully embrace the potential of our students and teammates, we must seek to understand the profoundly valuable assets they possess.

To fully embrace the potential of our students and teammates, we must seek to understand the profoundly valuable assets they possess.

Examining deficit ideology provides a meaningful next step to understanding the way our language and beliefs merit close examination in tandem with determining our purpose. Deficit ideology is “a way of blaming the victim, of justifying outcome inequalities by pointing to ‘deficiencies’ in marginalized communities. It justifies oppression by placing those being oppressed as the problem—and by pointing to the oppressors as the solution” (Baker, 2020).

To foster clarity around the why behind our why, Hubbard (2023), author of *The Equity Expression: 6 Entry Points for Nonnegotiable Academic Success*, describes the importance of manifesting equitable actions and



Further reading on this topic is a tremendous opportunity to more deeply understand ways to align your purpose to equitable practices and could begin with Gorski and Swalwell's (2023), *Fix Injustice, Not Kids and Other Principles for Transformative Equity Leadership*.

attitudes in everything we do as a teacher, including pursuit of our purpose. The entry points to equity in Hubbard's book describe opportunities where equitable practices might be considered or enhanced, including the following:

- mindsets
- relationships
- processes
- products
- spaces
- systems

When thinking about the importance of purpose as related to equity, the entry points of mindsets, relationships, and processes are especially applicable.

Mindsets: Think about the “mental attitudes that determine how [you] interpret and respond to situations” (Hammond, 2014, p. 157). Consider your own beliefs about teaching and learning, content, pedagogy, and students. What assumptions, attitudes, or biases do you recognize?

FIGURE 1.1



Source: Hubbard, F. (2023). *The equity expression: 6 entry points for nonnegotiable academic success*. Corwin.

An inequitable mindset: During a data analysis conversation, a seventh-grade teacher predicts that boys would not score well, noting that girls have better reading skills and work habits, which would influence their test scores.

An equitable mindset: A first-grade teacher reviews her curriculum resources as she begins planning for instruction. She notices that every story in the unit is centered around characters of one gender and one race, eliminating the opportunity for many students in her class to feel represented in their learning experiences. She seeks additional resources tied to the grade-level standard that include diverse characters throughout.

Relationships: Examine your relationships with students, teachers, and school leaders. How do you ensure that those relationships are psychologically safe and learner oriented and that they promote collaborative inquiry?

An inequitable relationship: A student is sleeping in class, and the teacher scolds them publicly for not being attentive then issues a written reprimand for misconduct.

An equity-focused relationship: A student is sleeping in class. The teacher discreetly asks the student if they're OK, reminding them of the classroom norms for engagement. Later in the day, the teacher meets individually with the student to ask about the obstacles impeding their attentiveness during class.

Processes: Assess the routines, procedures, and protocols you use in your day-to-day teaching and learning. How do you incorporate systemic processes into your classroom environment? The changes can be minor—like how you ask students to get in line—or major—like how you choose which topics to teach and when.

Inequitable process: To address the unfinished learning that students need support with, a teacher's lessons focus on the prerequisite skills from the previous grade, not on grade-level skills.

An equitable process: The students do grade-level work, and the teacher prioritizes the prerequisite skills to be addressed as scaffolding planned within grade-level lessons.

EMPLOYING YOUR WHY IN THE CLASSROOM

When connecting your purpose as an educator to your daily work, intentionally integrating specific practices will ensure success. For example, by routinely conducting an inventory of the ways you provide feedback to students through the lens of your purpose to ensure every student experiences equitable instruction, you are able to identify successful practices as well as where to make periodic adjustments.

There are three key strategies you can implement right now and, as a regular practice moving forward, use to elevate the integration of purpose in the classroom. They are the following:

- Plan for purpose
- Communicate purpose
- Share your purpose

PLAN FOR PURPOSE

Infusing teaching and learning with purpose begins with intentional planning for integration. While your lesson plans likely include space for learning outcomes, assessments, and activities, do you take the time to evaluate *why* you chose to utilize each of the specific tools and resources that will bring those plans to life? Practice pulling out a lesson plan (sourced from the school curriculum or created by you or a willing colleague) in a collaborative planning meeting and move through each section of the plan, one at a time, answering the question *why* as you read it.

Analyze a lesson plan and select the learning tasks you would use with your students. Use this chart to guide your analysis.

QUESTION	RESPONSE	CHANGES TO CONSIDER
Why was this learning task identified as the best choice to use with students?		

QUESTION	RESPONSE	CHANGES TO CONSIDER
Why do students need to learn this, and how will this (assessment, activity, etc.) deliver on that goal?		
Why is this the most appropriate standard to teach at this time?		

COMMUNICATE PURPOSE

Studies have shown that relevance increases learner engagement, particularly in older students, since as far back as the early twentieth century when Dewey (1913) wrote *Interest and Effort in Education*. John Hattie's research also highlights the incredible impact that occurs when learners understand the intention of what they are learning. It has an effect size of 0.88 (0.4 being the mean) (Clarke, 2021). It's easy, however, to rest on the assumption that because we know why something is important, those around us do as well. When it comes to your students, that may rarely be the case!

Begin by getting an understanding of whether you practice the habit of communicating purpose to your students. Do you tell them why they are learning a particular concept, why they are being asked to engage in an activity, or why the learning is progressing in a certain order? Over the course of a school day, keep a notepad nearby and write a tick mark, a check, or some other symbol each time you notice that you share the purpose of any activity with your students (even tasks like lining up in order or waiting for others to finish before beginning to speak, for example!). Use the tracking chart to set incremental goals for increasing the practice and to gather data at periodic intervals—once a week, for example—until the practice becomes internalized!

Practice: _____

TOTAL TIMES PURPOSE COMMUNICATED	GOAL	BY WHAT DATE?

Day 1	Day ____	Day ____	Day ____	Day ____	Day ____	Day ____

SHARE YOUR PURPOSE

Have you ever stopped to consider what students believe about you as a teacher and why you design instruction or create a classroom environment the way you have? Sharing your personal purpose with students—not the purpose of the Socratic Seminar they’re engaging in but rather why you serve as an educator—is likely to incite their recognition that you care for them and potentially open pathways to stronger relationships. This doesn’t have to be a formal event in which you garner the full attention (unless that’s your style) of the class but can be as simple as infusing intentional conversations into your interactions with students.

Start small: With the whole class (at any age group), share one of the reasons you became an educator and connect that reason to why you chose a specific activity the students will engage in as it relates to your purpose.

Engage with individuals: Tell students you will be asking them to each share (in whatever format makes most sense) the ways they believe you can most effectively help them succeed. Incorporate these suggestions as appropriate into instruction, assessments, resources, and so forth, and articulate that you made that intentional choice because you knew it was important to a student.

Gather data: Before coming to any conclusions on your own about what you think students perceive as your why as a teacher, ask them! This may be more effective with older students who could likely develop a thoughtful answer—but not always. Conduct an anonymous survey or poll to gather their ideas. Beware of the inclination to respond publicly to the private answers to avoid the risk of embarrassing anyone, but use the data to craft your next explicit actions to communicate your authentic purpose to your students and enjoy their appreciation for taking their ideas to heart!

GETTING YOUR GROOVE BACK: WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR WHY BECOMES FUZZY


Reading this chapter may elicit emotions of inspiration, curiosity, or excitement. Or perhaps it left you feeling uncertain and wondering: what if I really cannot find my purpose as a teacher? Or what if I cannot muster the enthusiasm for my work anymore, no matter how clear my purpose seems? The following approaches can help you navigate these emotions and experiences.

COME BACK LATER

The list of “should” is long in your life, and while you appreciate the value in finding your purpose as a teacher, perhaps it seems like one more item on an already lengthy task list. Although these activities are aimed at bringing clarity and calm to your hectic life, choose to give yourself permission to come back to them later if they currently increase your tension levels! Or set a very low-key action plan to try one activity per week or per month, and gauge how your emotional reserves are handling the load. If returning to this chapter later strikes you as a more comfortable step, consider alternatives that may elevate your wellbeing first.

RECONNECT WITH OLD PASSIONS

If nothing in your current work is inspiring you, reflect on a time when you truly loved your work as a teacher. While you may not be able to replicate a former school or group of students, examine the conditions surrounding that experience:



For further reading on the research-proven practices around sharing learning intentions and success criteria with students or around teacher credibility as these areas relate to your purpose, check out the following:

The Teacher Clarity Playbook, Doug Fisher and Nancy Frey, 2018, Corwin.

The Teacher Credibility and Collective Efficacy Playbook, Grades K–12, Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, and Dominique Smith, 2020, Corwin.

- Who was involved?
- What were your favorite things to be working on?
- Who was around you at the time?
- What rewards did you gain from the type of work you were doing (personal satisfaction, student achievement, accolades from others, etc.)?

Amongst your answers, look for connections to people, things, and actions that you could use to reinvigorate in your present environment. Did you love working on the school data committee and your current school does not have one? Seek your supervisor to discuss initiating a new group. Were you co-teaching with an inspiring colleague and there isn't enough staff for this anymore? Initiate a mentoring relationship with a newer teacher to co-plan with and observe each other's lessons, or seek a colleague on staff to be your mentor for the same!

SEEK THE SUPPORT OF OTHERS

In Chapter 2, you will learn about the incredible value of collaboration to withstand the risk of becoming very isolated as a teacher. This practice does not solely pertain to planning instruction but to the camaraderie and companionship that bolsters your ability to endure challenging times in your career. Chances are you are not the only one who is drifting or feeling a bit lackluster. Consider starting a book club with interested colleagues about a non-education related topic. Or ask your supervisor if they are aware of anyone who may be feeling disheartened by the work at hand, and reach out for a coffee to see if your experiences may provide one another some opportunities for mutual support.

TRY MINDFULNESS PRACTICES

Mindfulness does not mean solely meditation or practicing yoga—though these are very effective forms of mindfulness practice! Mindfulness is a range of strategies and actions that foster inner calm, a sense of awareness of self, and feelings of control over our environment. Reflective journaling, for example, and breathing exercises are ways to cultivate mindfulness and promote mental clarity and calm. If you're feeling distracted, stressed, overwhelmed, exhausted, or all of the above, examine basic mindfulness practices to help regain happiness and peace. Using a website, such as mindful.org can also provide further ideas.

The Big Ideas

As you delve deeper into this book, consider what you learned about the importance of clarifying your purpose here. Thus far you have explored the value of examining and identifying your personal purpose as a teacher, recognizing that this may evolve over time and there is no one perfect or final answer. You learned steps for engaging your purpose in the classroom through planning and also in connecting with students and how to align your actions with equity.

Use the activities within Chapter 1 at different times or stages in your career. Create a notebook where you may keep a record of each addition to even further enhance reflection opportunities around your personal growth and development. You'll notice as you read further that each of the chapters presents a unique opportunity to connect your practices to your purpose, too.

Let's Reflect

What surprised you about the ideas you generated about your purpose within this chapter?

What were the differences and/or similarities between your current beliefs about purpose and those you held when you first began teaching?

What are you still wondering about as it relates to applying purpose to your work as a teacher?

What's Next?

In Chapter 2, you will dig deep into the skills used in collaboration and examine the importance of connecting with colleagues of various roles and experience levels to not only fend off isolation but to grow as a professional. Future chapters will guide you on a learning journey through setting goals, seeking and applying feedback for your personal and professional growth, and applying procedures and routines to all areas of your work. Equipped with new understandings around your purpose as an educator, get ready to now maximize your impact alongside others through collaboration.

