

A Teacher's Life

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In association with Blue Marble University

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*SIXTY YEARS AGO I KNEW EVERYTHING;
NOW I KNOW NOTHING; EDUCATION IS
A PROGRESSIVE DISCOVERY OF OUR OWN
IGNORANCE.
WILL DURANT*

Preface

Mrs. Joan S. Griffin has been an educator for twenty-six years. She taught in the same school for those twenty-six years. She earned an Associate Degree from Georgia Highlands, formerly Floyd College, Under Graduate Degree from Breneau University, formerly Breneau College, Masters Degree and Educational Specialists Degree from Berry College. She has completed work from North Central University and Blue Marble University toward her Doctorate Degree. Her fields of learning are language arts, reading, social studies, science, curriculum development, and educational leadership. She is also certified to teach ESOL (English as a Second Language), endorsement to teach gifted and talented students, and endorsement to be a Teacher Support Specialist.

Her colleagues honored her in 2004-2005 by electing her to be Teacher of the Year for the school. She has been nominated and received honor in the Who's Who Among American Teachers for the following years: 2002-2003, 2004-2005, 2005-2006, and 2006-2007. This is an honor because the nominating students are in the twelfth grade and were former students. Only 5% of the country's premier educators are given this honor. The students who nominated Mrs. Griffin were also chosen to be in the Who's Who Among American High School Students or the National Dean's List.

She was inducted into the Kappa Delta Pi Honor Society of Educators in 1997. This society requires that educators must be on the Dean's List and have a GPA (grade point average) of 3.5 to 4.0.

She is a member of the Polk County Association of Retired Educators and the Georgia Association of Retired Educators.

It has taken Mrs. Griffin almost twenty years to complete this doctoral degree. She has had to stop on several occasions because of cancer, illnesses, and surgeries as well as having to care for her daughter, which she lovingly did. She is a cancer survivor for whom she gives God the praise, wonderful support from her family, church family, and friends with thanks and appreciation.

Her husband, Frank, to whom she has been married for forty-nine years is her friend as well as her husband. He is an avid model railroad specialist. Their only child, Amy, died in 2014. Amy and her Mama are cat lovers. They have three special fur babies: Calvin, Cleo, and Clarabelle, who do not know they are cats. They think they are human.

Mrs. Griffin is a member of the Aragon Baptist Church where she is the organist and also sings solos and duets with her husband. Her hobbies include reading, doing Bible research, knitting, and enjoying life with her best friend, her husband, Frank.

HE WHO LEARNS MUST SUFFER, AND
EVEN IN OUR SLEEP PAIN THAT CANNOT
FORGET FALLS DROP BY DROP UPON THE HEART,
AND IN OUR OWN DESPAIR, AGAINST OUR WILL,
COMES WISDOM TO US BY THE GRACE OF GOD.

AESCHYLUS

Dedication

There are so many people who need to be recognized in this dedication. The first is my precious daughter, Amy, who gave me the inspiration to complete this final degree. After she died, I just lost heart, but I could hear her saying, “Mama, you can this. I know you can!” One of the greatest compliments she every gave me was the day she told me, “Mama, you are the smartest woman I know.” My husband, Frank, is one of my greatest cheerleaders. I would never have been able to complete this without his encouragement and support. I love you, Frank and Amy.

My sister, Elaine, has been a tremendous influence as well. She is my sister and also my friend. Thank you for listening to all those telephone “cries”. I want to thank all my extended family because they have continuously supported me with their love and prayers. All of you will never know what you have meant to me. To all my students, I want to thank you for being such an important part of my life. You have given me precious memories I will never forget.

Dr. Pieter Beck and Germaine Wilson of Blue Marble have given me such wonderful support and help. This university was an answer to prayer. When suggestions were made with kindness and respect, and the offer to help was always available; I thought I had reached academia heaven. You will be in my memory forever.

I praise God that He gave me the strength and courage just when I needed it. He is always there, and I give Him the honor and the glory.

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Precious Memories

*TEACHERS BELIEVE THEY HAVE A GIFT
FOR GIVING; IT DRIVES THEM WITH THE SAME
IRREPRESSIBLE DRIVE THAT DRIVES OTHERS TO
CREATE A WORK OF ART OR A MARKET OR A
BUILDING.*

A. BARTLETT GIAMATTI

Chapter One

Teaching, Who Would Choose to Do That?

Is becoming a teaching a choice or a calling? Mr. Daniel Webster defines choice as the act of selecting options. He defines calling as an inner urging toward some profession, occupation or vocation. While these two definitions share similarities, the one difference is that a calling comes from an inner urging. Rather than just making a choice there is something inside a person that prompts them to listen to that urging.

I believe that when one decides to become a teacher, that person must first have a love for children. This does not imply that we must like children, but to become a successful teacher the love has to be in place. Every future teacher must have the desire to help every student in his or her classes. Helping students learn to learn is not an easy task, but it will be the most rewarding. This is where the love comes into play. Teachers should never give up on any student regardless of the circumstances.

I have had colleagues tell me they decided to teach because they could have time off during the summer months and for all the holidays they would get throughout the school term.

Many teachers complain about their salaries, but do they earn what they are paid? They prepare for the accountability standards that usually occur three times a year for beginning teachers and once a year for veteran teachers. They have special lessons planned for these times, so they can pass the accreditation for students' performances on standardized tests.

I believe with all my heart when a teacher helps his/her students learn; that is what being a teacher is all about.

A teacher must show excitement, creativeness, and innovativeness each day in the classroom. I believe that if the people on the State Boards of Education would reconsider the concept of standardized tests and look at how well a student does for an entire school term, they would have different opinions about requiring standardized tests. I have had students in my class who made all A's, B's, or C's who were so frightened by the standardized tests. There are more students with test anxiety of whom educators are not even aware, and these students will not do well on a standardized test.

Anyone who has the opinion that teaching is an easy job should follow in a real teacher's footsteps for just one day. I once had a student tell me that his father said to him, "Anyone can be a teacher because all they do is sit around all day, make the children behave, and they never do any real work."

I realized then that I had my work cut out for me with this student to help him understand that all teachers did not fall into that category. I wanted him to leave my class at the end of that school term learning as much as he could and knowing how hard I had worked to help him learn.

After years of study and learning, a teacher should have a desire to share what he/she has learned with his/her students. I would have been bored to tears if I thought I had to sit in a classroom all day and not help students learn. I found early in my teaching career that I

could learn a lot from my students if I took the time to listen to what they were saying, how they were saying it, and how they would react to my responses.

Having respect for each other is most important when certain issues are discussed.

Demonstrating respect is not always easy especially when you do not agree with what a student is saying. Learning to demonstrate for students how to respond when people have different opinions from theirs can be difficult, but as the old proverb tells us “Practice makes perfect.” Allowing students to express themselves without being ridiculed or rejected is an important teacher/student skill.

Humor is also an essential character trait that a teacher must possess. Learning to laugh at one's self is one of the most crucial things a teacher can do. It allows students to see you as an actual human being.

I never realized students had such a supernatural opinion of teachers. I saw one of my students in the grocery store one afternoon, and the next day he was telling the other students he had seen me buying groceries. They all seemed to be amazed that this was a chore every teacher had to do. I was actually surprised at the response from them.

When I would say something wrong or call a student by the wrong name, I would always laugh and say, “Oh well, that was my human mistake for the day.” I wanted them to understand that I was a human being who did things just like every other human being.

This also gave me the opportunity to demonstrate how effective laughter can be. Laughing with someone rather than at someone is another important skill.

Teachers should never be ashamed to share their emotions with students. When something sad in my life happened, if the students wanted to know why I was sad, I would always share with them. I wanted my students to understand my emotions just as I wanted to understand theirs.

I had a boy in my class who had to have his horse put down due to a prolonged illness. He cried when he was telling me about it, and I used his experience to discuss grief and sadness. I asked them if they would like to share something about losing a pet.

One year I had several students die from automobile accidents, natural causes, and unfortunate accidents at home. Allowing students to share their emotions during these horrific times were difficult for all of us, but it helped us to better understand our emotions and why we felt the way we did.

I have also had students who lost parents or siblings during a school term. These were especially difficult times. Asking the students if they felt or needed to share how they were feeling gave all of us a sense of sharing their grief, which was so necessary.

The duties of a teacher far exceed the expected classroom skills and management. A teacher must also have the ability to deal with many different kinds of situations that occur and to remember were we called or did we choose? The way we react when these situations arise can remain with students for the remainder of their lives.

There was a young teacher on my team who asked me one day why I hugged my students. I did not know quite how to respond to that question because I come from a family of

“huggers”. I told her that if a student came to me and needed a hug, I had to give one. She then told me that she was not a “hugger” and could she send her students to me if they needed a hug? I immediately said, “Yes!” I would have students come quietly into my room and whisper, “I need a hug.” I would hug them, and they would be on their way. I had students speaking to me in the cafeteria, hallways, and gymnasium who I did not even know because I had given them hugs.

Having taught middle grades for twenty-six years, I think many of our younger teachers are either afraid of giving hugs for fear of being accused of being too close with a student, or they are like the teacher who told me she was not a “hugger”. Middle graders need hugs as much or more than elementary students. Since I was in my forties when I began teaching, I always felt as if students thought of me as either a mother or in some cases the grandmotherly type, which did not bother me in the least. I even had children refer to me as Maw-Maw, and I just knew it was an endearing term, so I was not offended. It seemed to bother the students much more than me when they made this mistake.

Everything that happens can be used as a learning experience. What if it is not in your lesson plans for the day? It can still be a valuable learning experience. There are many skeptics out there who would disagree with me I am certain, but when some life experience can help students learn, that is what is important. While emotions and feelings play an important role in a teacher's life, these cannot be ignored when they happen.

You never really know what it is going to be like in any classroom until you have been there. I have been of the opinion for several years that instead of having student teachers

go to a classroom for one semester to do student teaching, they should be assigned a classroom for an entire school term. This would give them many opportunities to observe, learn, and teach.

Beginning teachers often feel as if they have been thrown to the wolves because being placed in your own classroom is much different than observing and teaching for maybe one or two days a week as a student teacher.

I was a teacher support specialist for fifteen years, and I have heard the same stories over and over again from beginning teachers. Many of them quit after the first school term, and some have even left before the school term ended. They definitely need to have more experience in the real school world.

Discipline is a major factor in classroom management. It is different for each child.

Learning to discern how to discipline individual students can take a lot of practice and time.

I always thought I had an advantage with this because of my age, and the fact that I also had a child who was in middle school, which would definitely help. While this did help in some situations, I came to learn children who are not disciplined at home are the most difficult to discipline at school. Sometimes tough love is the only way to deal with these students, but I felt it was better to give them tough love at this age rather than having them go to jail in high school. I cannot say I was able to save all of them, but I did rescue a few.

Preparing lesson plans is a chore. Learning how to teach and do things that will keep your students excited every day is a tremendous challenge. I always tried to remember how I felt in middle school. We would go to class, listen to the teacher for about forty minutes,

and then be given an assignment to complete for the next day. While I did have some wonderful teachers who taught me so very much, I also had those teachers who I dreaded going to their classes. I did not want to be that kind of teacher.

Parent conferences are also part of teaching. Most parents know or should know more about their children than teachers. They love and care about their children, and teachers should remember this when have conferences. I always told the parents I met with that I would not believe anything their children said about them if they would not believe anything they said about me. Having a good rapport with parents is one of the best things any teacher could do.

Dealing with administrators can be easy of difficult. In my twenty-six years of teaching, I have worked with six different principals. Four of these were males and two were females. They were each very different as they should have been, and each had his/her own way of managing our school. Some I agreed with, and some I did not, but that is the real world.

I have worked with different types of teachers. At one point in my career, one of the guidelines in the state of Georgia was for teachers to visit other teachers' classrooms and observe their teaching methods and classroom management. This bothered me at first, but the more I was observed the more assured I became with helping students learn. When I observed other teachers, I was impressed with some of them, and some of them were just not good teachers. While I had decided to use these observations as learning points for myself, some of the teachers took the remarks that I made personally. These remarks were not meant to be hurtful or degrading, and I regretted they were received in that manner.

Attending workshops and other extended studies were also a part of teaching. Many of these workshops were taught during summer vacation and were needed to maintain your certification. I always loved to learn and continue to do so today. I would get excited when a workshop was actually a good learning experience, but many of these were a waste of my time as well as the person pretending to teach them. It was required that you adhere to the Professional Standards in our state, or you would be unable to teach. I always had enough college credit classes that I did not have to attend too many of these workshops.

You could add endorsement to your teaching certificates, so I became excited about doing this. The first class I took was English as a Second Language (ESOL). I took this class at Berry College with teachers from around the world. It was one of the most interesting and informative classes. The instructor was excited about teaching, and the majority of students were excited about learning.

My fondest memories from this class were the two teachers I was assigned to assist with life in America. They were from Bulgaria and spoke English fairly well, but they had to depend on their dictionary of translated words quite frequently. I decided to carry them to K-Mart one day. They were simply amazed that you could buy so many items in one store. I finally found a place to sit, and they just went shopping on their own. When I saw their carts filled with bath soap (fifty or more bars), I asked why they needed all the soap. They told me they would be giving them as gifts when they returned home. I asked them why soap, and they told me their soap did not have any fragrance. I was so surprised to learn this because Bulgaria is the rose capitol of the world, and many fragrances are made from

the rose oil. I learned many things from them that summer, and it made me realize how blessed I was to be born in the United States. They were wonderful ladies, and I truly enjoyed spending time with them.

The next endorsement class that I took was Teaching Gifted and Talented Students. This class was filled with a massive amount of information. It took three quarters for me to complete this class, and then prepare a summer program for students in a middle school. The students and parents enjoyed having their students participate in this program. They said they would pay if we offered it every summer. The children did not want it to end. This is what learning is all about. Children who enjoy what they are learning and having fun at the same time.

The final endorsement class that I took was Teacher Support Specialists. I feel that I really needed this class because of the student teachers who would be assigned to me. It is a grave responsibility to know you are helping a beginning teacher because the information you share with them can have a tremendous impact.

My middle grade concentrations were language arts, English, science, and social studies. I had the privilege to teach average students for eight years, and then I was assigned gifted and talented students for eighteen years. My last two years of teaching I taught creative writing to sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students.

There are also extracurricular activities that teachers must volunteer or be asked to do them. I had assisted with the Academic Team for several years, so when the sponsor left to teach at another school, I volunteered to take her position as the main sponsor. I did this

for twenty-four years, I also volunteered to sponsor the Pep Team for our school, which I did for three years, and I was the drama club coach for one year.

I have given a brief introduction to my twenty-six years of teaching, and these are some of the topics I will be discussing in the following chapters. I know I was a good teacher, and I know that I gave my very best to my students. Was it always easy? Were students always kind and respectful? Were colleagues always helpful? Were administrators always understanding and supportive? Those of you who have been or still are educators probably know the answers to these questions as well as I do, but you continue to help students learn because that is what a teacher's life is all about.

*IF WE SUCCEED IN GIVING THE
LOVE OF LEARNING, THE LEARNING
ITSELF IS SURE TO FOLLOW.*

JOHN LUBBOCK

Chapter Two

What Is the Heartbeat of America?

In his book, *Strengthening the Heartbeat*, Thomas J Serviovanni stated that,

Schools should invest developing a culture where leading and learning together is a core school improvement strategy.” People who are called to teach rely firmly on this principal. Every educator should have the desire for his/her students to achieve a higher level of learning and success.

What is the heartbeat of education? The heart is a powerful organ. Not only does it supply the blood we all need to survive, but also it is the source for how our minds and bodies work. Our hearts help us to follow our beliefs, values, and our own personal visions as to how we perceive things.

Our heads help us to learn those teaching theories and, how we use them. This is where all our individual ideas come into focus. Learning to accept the learning differences that each of us has is an awesome skill to possess, and it is not easily learned. We become much better educators when we can come to this understanding.

One school term my principal asked me if I would tutor a young man who was woefully behind with his eighth grade education because of several incidents that had occurred in his family. He was a good boy and eager to please. I discovered right away that his reading skills were at a first to second grade levels, so I began by helping him with his sight words.

One of the words in a story was wag, and he could not grasp this word. He asked me one day when I was tutoring him if he could draw it. I did not understand what he was going to do, but I told him he could. He drew a picture of a dog with its tail wagging, and he put quotation marks around the tail. He knew exactly what it meant, and he could define it by drawing rather than a verbal definition. I was so happy that I almost cried! He was learning, but his learning abilities were different. At the end of that school term, he was reading on a fifth grade level, and I was so very proud of him. Helping this young man learn improved my heart and my soul.

Berry College, of which I am an alumna, has a slogan that is: Head, Heart, and Hands. I could always understand the head and heart, but where did the hands come into play? I learned the meaning of the hands with the following statement: the hands of leadership or the hands of authority. Other statements begin to come to my mind: The hands of love, the hands of compassion, the hands of kindness, or the helping hands, just to name a few.

I have been told that I am a nurturing person. In fact, one year I had a student teacher tell me that her supervisor teacher told her that, I was too nurturing. Over the years when students have come back to visit with me, one of the things they always tell me is, "We knew you cared about us, Mrs. Griffin." Well, maybe being called too nurturing was a compliment after all.

My daughter introduced me to a little book several years ago titled, *Creed to Live By, Dreams to Follow*, edited by Susan Polis Schulz. I discovered a vast amount of wisdom and knowledge in this sixty-one-page book. One of the selections by Nancy Sims who wrote "A

"Creed to Live By" was especially helpful to me during my early years of teaching. It is as follows:

Don't undermine your worthiness by comparing yourself with others. It is because we are so different that each of us is special.

Don't set your goals by what other people deem important. Only you know what is best for you.

Don't take for granted the things closest to your heart. Cling to them as you would life, for without them life is meaningless.

Don't let your life slip through your fingers by living in the past or for the future. By living your life one day at a time, you live all the days of your life.

Don't give up when you still have something to give. Nothing is really over until the moment you stop trying.

Don't be afraid to encounter risks. It is by taking chances that we learn how to be brave.

Don't shut love out of your life by saying it's impossible to find. The quickest way to lose love is to hold it too tightly, and the best way to keep love is to give it wings.

Don't dismiss your dreams. To be without dreams is to be without hope, to be without purpose.

Don't run through life so fast that you forget where you've been but also where you're going. Life is not a race, but a journey to be savored each step of the way.

There is so much to be learned from this creed! I shared it with my students at the beginning of each new school term. It doesn't mean that we will always succeed the first time we try, but that we should never give up trying.

Another book that I have grown to love over the years *A Touch of Wonder* written by Arthur Gordon. This was actually our textbook in one of the classes I took at Berry College while earning my Masters Degree. In Chapter Two of this book the author discusses his educational background stating that, "I am not at all sure that I took proper advantage of my opportunities. I suppose that during those six years of higher education some knowledge seeped in. In those rare encounters a spark would jump from another person to me. Usually the other person was older, wiser, more experienced, and willing to share certain insights or attitudes. The setting was never academic. One of those persons was a teacher. A spark jumped between us, and when it did, it left me changed. I wanted to be the kind of teacher where sparks would fly from me to my students. When I saw the look in their eyes light up like a light bulb being turned on was such a magical moment in time for me. My desire was to help them learn how to learn. How else can an education really be appreciated without the ability to learn? I so wanted to help students learn.

One school term when we were learning the different genres of literature, I discovered that many of my students had never been read to or had read to anyone in their homes. This made me sad because I had been read to from a very early age, and I believe that is why I love to read to this day. It is one of my passions.

I started reading to my students when there was extra time at the end of class. I chose books from many different genres, but there are two that I distinctly remember. They are, *The Complete Tales and Poems of Winnie-the Pooh* by A. A. Milne and *Love You Forever* by Robert Munsch. *Love You Forever* has only twenty-eight pages, but it is a beautiful story about a mother and her son from the time of his birth until he is a grown man. I had one student who asked every day would I please read *Love You Forever* again. By this time I had read it so many time; the students began to say the words with me. When this student came to tell me good by at the end of the eighth grade school term, he told me that he was going to buy a copy of *Love You Forever*, and he was going to read it to his children every night. The lessons from this little book will definitely remain with him forever.

Winnie-the-Pooh has always been one of my favorite characters. Although inspired by A. A. Milne's only child, Christopher Robin Milne, when Christopher was just a year old he receive a stuffed bear, tiger, pig and donkey. The idea of bringing these toys to life was inspired by Daphne Milne, Christopher's mother.

Thus Christopher Robin and all his friends became the inspiration for the stories Mr. Milne wrote. Mr. Milne was quoted as saying:

"If a writer, why not write
 One whatever comes in sight?
 Intermezzo of a sort;
 When I write them, little thinking
 All my years of pen-and-inking

Would be almost lost among
Those four trifles for the young.”

So many of my classes were introduced to the characters of, “The House at Pooh Corner” and other thrilling stories and poems. These were the special times for me as I looked at the eager faces while I was reading. I knew they were not only learning to understand what was being read to them, but they were also learning lessons for life. Nothing thrilled me more than when time ran out; the students were asking for more.

One clue to becoming a successful reader is the reader must become the character they are reading about in voice and actions. I also encouraged students to bring books they thought the class would enjoy and have them do volunteer reading. Teaching students to mimic characters’ voices and actions helps them to become more interesting and fun readers.

I also got my students involved with story telling. Being able to relate a story just by telling is a wonderful trait. It could be a real story or a made up story. Students loved being able to share funny things that had happened to them and to make up things that were exciting to them. I also shared funny things that I had experienced which helped to get the story telling started. Many of these stories were folk tales that children had asked their grandparents about which were very interesting. Learning about your heritage from stories that have been passed down from generation to generation is important. Even adopted or foster children would have stories to share about their adopted or foster parents. Learning how to tell these stories in a charismatic manner is absolutely fantastic.

The students who did not participate verbally enjoyed these times as well because they would come to me, or to the student who had shared a story, and express how much they enjoyed listening to it.

Susan Lynham tells of a word from a Southern African tribe called the *ubuntu*. The word, *ubuntu* means, I am because *you* are, and *you* are because *we* are. This is what every classroom should be all about. There should be that faith and hope where strong beliefs are put into action (Sergiovanni, 2005). Mr. Sergiovanni also states, “The important work of the teacher is to really think about teaching, to think about it all day, everyday, and through the thinking to get better at the doing.” This is what helping students learn to learn means, and it does require more than a formal education. It is very difficult at times, but the end result is rewarding!

*I OWN A LOT TO MY TEACHERS
AND MEAN TO PAY THEM
BACK SOMEDAY.*

STEPHEN LEACOCK

Chapter Three

Humor in the Classroom: It Is Okay to Laugh

In *Roget's International Thesaurus* the definition of humor is: wit, pleasantry, salt, spice or savor, nimble with, dry wit, dry humor, subtle wit, comedy, broad humor, visual humor, cartoon, comic strip, the funnies, and the definitions go on for several pages. A teacher must possess several of these characteristics or he/she will never survive in the classroom.

One of the greatest lessons I learned from being with students every day was to be prepared for anything, especially with middle graders. Humor can and should be used effectively in the classroom. I have told that I have a dry sense of humor. I have the ability to tell someone some ridiculous story with a straight face, and he/she will believe it. I told two of my friends that if they drank a diet coke with a candy bar that the diet cokes would wipe out the calories in the candy bar. I thought they knew I was kidding, but they took it factually. I had to get that cleared away in a hurry.

My husband, who is a retired biomedical technician in the medical field, worked for a large hospital in Rome, Georgia. I told some of our friends that he cleaned all the elevators in the hospital. They also believed me. In fact, one of them commented to my husband how clean the elevators were in the hospital. We all got a big laugh over these jokes, so humor can always be good for the heart and soul.

In their book, *If They're Not Laughing, They're Not Killing Each Other*, Elaine M. Lundberg and Cheryl Miller Thurston have written some wonderful ideas for teachers who do not think they are funny or cannot display a sense of humor. They used a quote from Mark

Twain that I like. Mr. Twain said, “Humor is the great thing, the saving thing after all. The minute it crops up, all bitterness yields, all our irritations slip away, and a sunny spirit takes their place.” You should not worry if students do not approve of your sense of humor to begin with. Just be persistent in a friendly manner and invite them to share something humorous.

Using music as a part of humor is also helpful. I have some songs for all the parts of speech that I would play each day that we covered a part of speech. We started with the noun, and then proceeded to the pronoun, verb, adverb, adjective, preposition, conjunction, and finally the interjection. At this point, almost every student was participating with the singing. These were silly songs with silly verses and choruses, but the students really liked singing them, and they were learning the parts of speech as well. Learning could be fun!

Even bad jokes can be funny. Here are some examples I have heard over the years: “What’s purple and goes slam, slam, slam, slam?” The answer is a four-door grape. “What do you get when a piano falls down a mine shaft?” The answer is A-flat minor. “How do you catch a unique rabbit?” The answer is unique on him. “How do you catch a tame rabbit?” The answer is the tame way.

One of the greatest comedians of all times was Robin Williams, and he said, “Comedy is acting out an optimism.” There are so many different ways humor can be used to compare and contrast, interview techniques, analyzing, cause and effect, just to name a few of the many different literary components. Allowing students to be optimistic, not only enhances their thinking skills, it also helps them to broaden their horizons in so many different ways.

The Laughing Classroom a book written by Diane Loomans and Karen Kolberg is another great book for beginning teachers. I wish that my teaching instructors had recommended this book as well as the one mentioned in s previous paragraph. They are wonderful teaching tools. The authors state in the preface of the book that it is a guide to help reawaken our playful, spontaneous self, which may have gotten lost somewhere between correcting papers and collecting the paycheck. They go further to say that these methods will help create a learning environment that will be filled with trust, creativity, spontaneity, wonder, and joy. These are all things that will help students and teachers bond. An adaption of an ancient Chinese poem tells us:

"If you are thinking a year ahead smile,

If you are thinking ten years ahead, laugh,

If you are thinking one hundred years ahead, teach others to laugh.

By sowing a smile once, you will have harvest once.

By planting laughter, you will have harvest tenfold.

By teaching others to laugh, you will harvest one hundredfold."

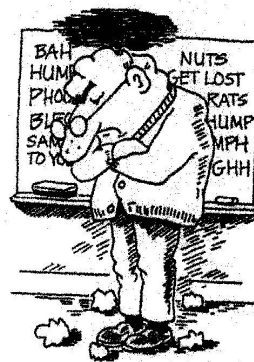
This proverb has much wisdom. When a person decides to become a teacher, their perspectives change rapidly if they are not called to do it. Being confronted with the frustrations of hopelessness, overworked, under paid, lack of recognition, red tape administrators, tested patience, and always having your mind challenged can be overwhelming.

A quote by Doris Lessing states, “Laughing is by definition healthy. When we learn to laugh and enjoy our students, they will begin to enjoy their teachers as well.” On the next page there is a list of things that every teacher needs to read. It is from *The Laughing Classroom*:

Fifty Excuses for Not Laughing

How to Look Like You Were
Weaned on a Pickle

1. I tried it once and it didn't work.
2. Our school is highly academic.
3. The students are already hysterical.
4. I will have to ask my principal first.
5. The children might miss their buses.
6. I'm not dressed for the occasion.
7. I don't have time for such nonsense.
8. It's not proper training for the real world.
9. I might get laugh lines.
10. I don't do stand-up comedy.
11. It takes too much preparation.
12. Things are absolutely perfect the way they are.
13. We can't afford to add this to the curriculum.
14. It's not in our school code of ethics.
15. Is this one of those right-brain approaches?
16. I might get calls from irate parents.
17. It could bring on my allergies.
18. We just had the walls painted.
19. I don't have sufficient background.
20. Since I was miserable in school, they'll be miserable.
21. Can't we just buy a laugh track?
22. We're a public school, not a private school.
23. I laugh only in the privacy of my own home.
24. It's way too messy.
25. My students have never seen my teeth.
26. Perhaps after I get my master's degree.
27. I'll bring it to my committee for discussion.
28. Maybe we'll try it as an assignment.
29. If I start laughing, I won't be able to stop.
30. It won't help my students pass their SATs.
31. I'm too old to start laughing now.
32. What do you think school is—a sitcom?
33. What if I lose face?
34. I'd like to read more about it first.
35. Students might assume that life is a big joke.
36. Maybe if I were paid more, I'd reconsider.
37. There's nothing funny about my classroom.
38. My parents never taught me how.
39. It's not statistically sound.
40. I hear that it's bad for the bladder.
41. I'm saving it for summer vacation.
42. I was weaned on a pickle!
43. I read that laughter destroys brain cells.
44. Can I get any CEUs for it?
45. The school board will never approve.
46. I don't have enough handouts.
47. You don't understand—I have a bad hip.
48. My laugh sounds like a Canadian goose.
49. My classroom isn't big enough.
50. Gee whiz, it slipped my mind.



While humor cannot solve everything in the classroom it provides an important outlet for teachers as well as students. Learning to laugh with each other rather than at each other is important and should be learned by every educator and every student. Humor can help to make some days much better and other days brighter,

I read somewhere that you never grown old as long as you don't allow wrinkles to grow on your heart. I vowed I would never allow this to happen to me, and sometimes this is difficult to do. I wanted my students to know and understand, especially in my later years of teaching, that I was no longer the proverbial spring chicken, but I remained capable of doing fun and exciting things with them because they helped me to stay young at heart.

The actress, Jamie Lee Curtis, wrote a book, called, *Today I Feel Silly*. It is about a little girl who goes through a variety of emotions such as: feeling silly, grumpy and mean, angry, hurt feelings, joyful, confused, quiet, excited, love, cranky, feeling small, walking on air, full of pizzazz, discouraged and frustrated, heavy and gray, and at the end of the book she discovers that is okay to experience all of these emotions. We just need to understand how long each one should last. I believe that every adult and student should read this book. It describes all of us on certain days and at certain times.

Helping students to learn how to deal with these different emotions is also a responsibility of an educator. Children should never be ashamed or afraid to express their emotions. Learning to share these feelings with others is a wonderful attribute. Of course in middle school everything

can be such a “drama”, but sometimes just listening to a student explain how and why they feel about something can be the most important thing a teacher can do.

Dr. William A. Ward was quoted as saying, “A keen sense of humor helps us overlook the unbecoming, understand the unconventional, tolerate the unpleasant, overcome the unexpected, and outlast the unbearable.” If every parent, educator, administrator, and the community as a whole could somehow remind themselves of this quote, life would be wonderful!

Great lessons to compare and contrast can be used by the quote Madame de Stael made, “Wit consists in seeing the resemblance between things which differ and the difference between things which are alike.” Students’ creativities can really be seen when you use this quote. Questions could be asked where there are no definitive answers, but teachers can be amazed at the responses,

Abraham Lincoln summed it up pretty well with this quote, "Most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be." If an educator enters his/her classroom without a sense of humor nothing good will be accomplished. It would be impossible to create something funny all the time, but it never hurts to always smile or give a hug because they are priceless without having to say a word.

*THE FIRST IDEA THAT THE CHILD MUST
ACQUIRE IN ORDER TO BE ACTIVELY
DISCIPLINED IS THAT OF THE DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL; AND THE TASK OF
THE EDUCATOR LIES IN SEEING THAT
THE CHILD DOES NOT CONFOUND GOOD WITH
IMMOBILITY, AND EVIL WITH ACTIVITY.*

MARIA MONTESSORI

Chapter Four

Discipline Is Not an Easy Task

Discipline is a difficult topic to discuss with educators and parents. Many feel that corporal punishment should be used while others believe there are other methods that should be employed. It is definitely a controversial subject. Of course, I am an older teacher, and when I was in elementary school, junior high school, and high school corporal punishment was enforced with one hundred percent of the parents' permission. In fact, if you got paddled at school, you would most assuredly get one at home as well. I feel this was overkill. Parents should have discussed the inappropriate behavior at home, but to get punished again was intolerable.

I had a twin sister, and we were in the same class in the second grade. Our teacher had to leave the classroom, and she said, "Absolutely no talking!" Well, June and I talked to each other, and when the teacher came back she asked, "Did anyone talk?" Of course the other students told her that June and I had talked to each other. She called us to the front of the classroom and gave each of us two licks with a Bolo Bouncer paddle. We were both so embarrassed. That was the last paddling we ever got in school. When we go home, we explained to our parents that we weren't talking to anybody; we were just talking to each other, which in our minds was not the same thing at all. Our parents explained to us talking to each other was talking, and we had better not ever do it again. We never did!

I believe that a valuable part of classroom management is a discipline plan. Students, parents, teachers, and administrators should all have part in this plan. A discipline plan means that you do not have to stop and think about how appropriate or inappropriate behavior should be.

Personally, I could never have used corporal punishment on a student. I felt that if it had to be used it should come from parents or administrators. Every educator has to make this decision for himself/herself. Rules have changed so much from the time that I was in school. Now, there must be a signed permission form from the parents that will or will not permit corporal punishment. Many students prefer corporal punishment over lunch or after school detention. Lunch detention is especially annoying to students because they must sit at a separate table separated from the other students, and they cannot socialize or talk during this time, which for middle school students is so difficult.

When I first began to make a discipline plan, I followed all county and school guidelines and rules. Next, I allowed students and parents to have an opinion. Students feel empowered when they are given the opportunity to make decisions about what happens in their classrooms. Actually some of their suggestions for punishment were much more extreme than mine. Parents were asked to become involved as well. After all these discussions had taken place, I then wrote my discipline plan and submitted it to my administrator for approval. I also gave every student a copy, and it was posted on the bulletin board as well.

The most important thing I discovered in my twenty-six years of teaching was that motivating students to follow a discipline plan was much better than telling them they had

to do this or not do that. Of course the county and school rules must be followed, but motivation is the key found to be the most successful in my classroom.

I always posted the *Golden Rule*, "*Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you.*" We discussed this extensively, and I was amazed at the students' ideas about what this meant, and why it should apply to them.

Praise is a wonderful way to motivate students. Sometimes, it is just a simple, "Thank you for putting that paper in the trash." If a student did exceptionally well on a test I would reward them with a Jolly Rancher (a piece of candy students loved to get). If the entire class followed all the classroom rules, and not one of them got a white slip telling them they had broken a rule, everyone in the class got a Jolly Rancher. Sometimes, I gave Jolly Ranchers to everyone for just being great kids. In Lee Canter's book, *Assertive Discipline*, he gives the following chart for 50 Opportunities to Say You're Terrific!

50 OPPORTUNITIES TO SAY "YOU'RE TERRIFIC"

Praise students for:

1 entering the classroom quietly	25 making a new friend
2 arriving to class on time	26 good effort on a long-term project
3 cooperating while teacher takes attendance	27 sharing
4 returning permission slips and school forms on time	28 being sensitive to others' feelings
5 transitioning into an activity	29 learning a new skill
6 following directions	30 appropriate use of school property
7 saying "please" and "thank you"	31 returning borrowed books and materials
8 listening attentively	32 showing enthusiasm
9 helping a classmate	33 being responsible for a classroom job
10 bringing necessary materials to class	34 offering help without being asked
11 handing in homework	35 not wasting paper and supplies
12 being a polite audience at an assembly	36 staying on task
13 beginning work right away	37 telling the truth
14 asking questions when unsure	38 accepting a new challenge
15 good behavior during a test	39 behaving when a guest is in the room
16 participating in a class discussion	40 reading at home
17 walking appropriately in the halls	41 participating in school functions
18 working cooperatively with a partner	42 demonstrating a positive attitude
19 a performance in a play or presentation	43 giving one's best effort
20 cleaning up	44 participating in a community improvement project
21 good effort on an assignment	45 participating in a group activity
22 assisting a new student	46 remaining calm during a problem situation
23 sharing school experiences with parents	47 showing creativity
24 making up missed assignments	48 keeping busy when work is finished
	49 taking turns
	50 working cooperatively with an aide or volunteer

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Parents had much rather hear good things about their children than negative. I always attempted to text or send home a positive note when a student followed one of the "You're Terrific" things. This made students feel so proud and parents as well.

I had a young man in my homeroom, and he was a special student. He was one of the most respectful and kind students I ever had the pleasure to know. Friday was hat day, so just about every boy in girl in the school wore some kind of cap or hat. When we pledged allegiance to the flag on this particular day, he was the only young man to remove his cap and hold it over his heart until the pledge was completed. After watching this young man do this for several Fridays, I acknowledged what he had been doing to the entire class. I presented him with a certificate for displaying excellent citizenship, and he also got some Jolly Ranchers as well.

I texted his parents and told them how proud I was of this young man, and I knew they were especially proud of him as well. His mother told me that he had been doing that for many years because his Father had served in the Gulf War, and he did it out of respect for him, all veterans, and the troops who continued to serve. She said no one had ever noticed him doing it before, and I was the first to recognize it. I felt so proud and honored. I'm sure other teachers saw him do this, but for some reason had failed to recognize him for it. I am so very glad that I did.

The computer has made it so much easier for us to communicate with parents. Teachers should always remain in touch with parents. This helps alleviate many problems, which I had to learn in a difficult way. Always remember to communicate!

Most parents, including myself, will always defend their children. I learned very quickly to listen to parents. I once asked my Mother why she and my Daddy always believed the teacher? Now, I did not get into trouble very often, but when I did my parents would listen to what the teacher had to say, and politely tell them they would take care of the problem at home, which they did. She told me they did not always agree with the teacher, but they did not want my twin sister and I to ever lose respect for them. She said they always called the teachers afterwards to express their feelings about a given situation and assured the teachers that my sister and I knew nothing about the phone call. I have often thought what my sister's and my opinions would have been if our parents had responded differently.

During my twenty-fourth year of teaching I had a class comprised of students who were in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. I had them twice a day because I was helping them learn English and literature. This school term was the worst of all my previous years of teaching. The seventh grade class was a challenge to say the least.

There were eight students in that class who seemed intent on making this my most difficult school term, and they succeeded. One student in particular was the leader, and the others would follow by his example. He would come to class loudly and continue talking even after class had begun. I have never really liked chewing gum or bubble gum, but the school

rule stated that if the teacher did not object, it would be all right for students to chew gum in their classes. I told the students that while I did not prefer gum, they could chew it in my class. They had to follow the guidelines:

Don't be rude when chewing.

Keep your mouth closed, so that you do not disturb others.

Don't smack, pop, or blow bubbles.

When you are finished with the gum, put it in a small piece of paper, and put it in the trash.

I did not find any of these guidelines difficult to understand or to follow, but this particular student came to class every day and broke not one but several of the guidelines. Of course the first response was, "Why are you picking on me?"

The next problem that arose with the same student was the creating all kinds of classroom disturbances, which were annoying to me as well as other students. Such as coming to class and pounding on the desk as if playing the drums, getting up during the middle of my instructions to sharpen a pencil, or put trash in the can which led others to follow. I tried to handle these problems on my own without contacting parents or administrators. BIG MISTAKE!!!

My principal came to my room one day to inform me that I had been accused of "bullying" a student, and every student in the class had to be interrogated. I was completely dumbfounded. This had never happened to me before. The disruptive students told completely different stories from the majority of the other students, but I was the one who

would suffer the consequences. While I did have the support of colleagues and other students, the superintendent got involved, and it turned into a fiasco. Never, ever try to handle this type of out right misbehavior on your own. I had never had students to behave so inappropriately before, and while I thought it was best to try to handle the situation myself, I found out quickly that it wasn't.

What lessons did I learn from this? Children are always going to be children no matter what. I should have made parent contacts much sooner, I should have asked other colleagues to observe and make suggestions, and I should have notified administrators much sooner that there was a problem, and I needed help. Even veteran teachers should learn that sometimes you cannot handle a situation on your own, and it is all right to ask for help.

This is another reason that discipline is such an important topic. I would never want another educator to have to face the difficulties that I did that school term. I had feelings of despair, anger, and other overwhelming emotions I cannot begin to describe. I almost retired that school term, but I didn't. I felt there were more children that I could help learn, and I wanted to do that more than anything.

*SETTING AN EXAMPLE
IS NOT THE MEANS OF
INFLUENCING ANOTHER, IT IS
THE ONLY MEANS.*

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Chapter Five

Moral and Ethical Character: Taught Modeled, and Learned

Another issue that teachers have to undertake is etiquette and helping students to know what it means and how they should respond in certain situations. When students are not taught etiquette and social skills at home, it becomes a challenge educators must face.

It became part of my curriculum every day to teach and model many of these skills to my students. One problem I was able to address using vocabulary. I hate the word, fart . Many boys in middle school and a few girls developed a love for this word. I would often hear, "Mrs. Griffin, he/she farted." I chose a vocabulary word that was more appropriate. The word is flatulent, and it means: puffy, bloated, or filled with excessive air. The students liked this word so well they began to use it as often as necessary. They also shared with their friends that the "farted" problem was under control.

The next lesson that I had to teach was how to ask or state correctly how to be excused for the bathroom. I could hardly bear it when a student would say. "Mrs. Griffin, I have to go pee or another which was completely unacceptable; I need to change my pad." First of all, the other students or myself could have cared less what bodily functions they needed to perform while they were in the bathroom. Secondly, these remarks were crude. I explained that young ladies and young gentlemen did not express themselves in this manner in public. All they needed to do was raise their hands or come quietly to my lectern or desk and ask if they could be excused.

The lesson about germs followed. I kept a box of tissues in the front and back of my classroom along with a bottle of hand sanitizer. I explained that if a student needed a tissue or to use the sanitizer; all they had to do was quietly leave their desks and get or use what was needed. If they had to sneeze or cough before they could get the tissue, all they had to do was cover their mouths with their hands and then get the tissue and use the sanitizer. If they needed to go outside to blow their noses, that was fine as well. The main purpose was that none of us were spreading germs anymore than necessary.

There was a television program that was on several years ago called *Captain Kangaroo*. We learned so many wonderful lessons from this program. One of the Captain's rules was the magic words are please and thank you. I have never forgotten these words after all these years, and they continue to have the same impact on people. I would tell my students about this, and they thought it was so funny; especially when I would remind them of the magic words.

There are so many issues that can arise from etiquette that every teacher will just have to handle in the best manner for his/her classroom management. If the problem is ignored, it will not go away, and it will become a constant irritation to your students as well as yourself. Some of these will be very minor while others will be major. Every teacher wants a classroom where every student feels comfortable without feeling embarrassed or overwhelmed.

As a teacher when I think that all the responsibilities of teaching social amenities had become a part of our teaching curriculum. There are so many different things that fall

under this topic. How can a teacher address them all? The only solution I decided upon was to address them when and if they occurred in my classroom. Being a role model is more important than all the lessons that could be taught with regards to certain topics.

The most important part of any social amenity is having self-respect. How do you teach or model self-respect? This was one of the most difficult tasks that I faced while teaching. It can be done, but it requires much patience, much practice, and much love. When students had rather be crass and crude, it is often quite a chore to help them understand that their lives can be so much better when they learn to respect themselves and other people.

Middle grades students love to role-play. I found this to be a very effective method to help students learn self-respect. Why is bullying such a terrible thing to be occurring in our schools? Those students who do not have self-respect find this to be a successful means of trying to earn self-respect. Helping students understand that this only makes them look like bullies. The majority of students, teachers, and other staff members do not find this as an admirable trait. Intimidating another student or embarrassing another student is wrong.

When we take the time in the classroom to model these kinds of behavior, it allows the person doing the bullying to see the other person's point of view. Allowing the bullies to be on the opposite side of the bullying opens a different picture for them to see. They must act exactly as the person they were bullying to act, and they had to take everything that was done to them. Of course, no hitting or anything else physical would actually occur, but these things would be acted out as if they had really happened. Did this

stop the bullying? No, I am sorry to say it didn't, but it did limit the amount of bullying that was occurring and for that I was thankful.

How students behave in the cafeteria is another huge problem. So many students have come to me and asked to be seated somewhere else while eating because the student next to him/her exhibits no table manners. They smack their food, put their elbows on the table, slurp their beverage, and talk with their mouths full. Another role modeling lesson was needed for these students. I would sit at the lunch table with them and model their behavior. I would do the exact same things they were doing that were so offensive to their table partners. When the student around me began to complain about my manners, I would immediately apologize and tell them that I was unaware that I was doing something offensive to them, and I appreciated them for making me aware of them. I told them that I would work on my table manners. This had the greatest impact! Sometimes students just needed to observe an adult who did not use the correct table manners for them to understand how their own manners could be offensive.

Oprah Winfrey, who is popular in the United States, told a story about her first invitation to the White House for dinner. She was taken aback when she was seated at the table for dinner and saw all the silverware and other table dinnerware. She saw some water in a little bowl and thought it was for her to drink; so she did. When she began observing other dinner guests putting their fingers in the bowls and wiping them with their napkins, she was so embarrassed. She vowed that after that night, she was going to learn all the proper

rules of etiquette. While the majority of us will never be invited to a formal dinner, it is always important that we know how to behave and how each dinner implement is used.

Many students were very happy being taught all of these rules of etiquette while others could have cared less. Did this indicate teachers should not teach them these skills?

Absolutely not, I have many students who have returned to visit with me and tell me how they were able to apply many of these rules in real life. How that thrilled me! In fact, one of my students is in the Secret Service and assigned to the White House. This student is very happy to know how to behave and eat properly,

It causes me great sadness to know that rules of etiquette and social amenities are not being taught in the homes any longer. Following the very simplest social amenities is so easy to do. Therefore, it becomes the responsibility of the teacher to do what he/she can do while these students are with them. Some students will be grateful while others will not care. I was just thankful for the ones who cared.

Teachers should never become discouraged because these lessons are not easy to teach and sometimes even for difficult for students to understand. You just have to do your best and keep trying. That is what teaching is all about, keeping on and keeping on.

I discovered a book way back in the Stone Age of 1997 by Alex J. Packer titled *How Rude!* This book was so helpful to me, and I would recommend it for all beginning and veteran teachers. Understanding and learning about each person's feelings in a given situation will help diffuse many volatile situations with regards to appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. Learning these characteristics will help all teachers, and students should be

allowed to participate in the process. The collaboration among those who are involved can lead to a better understanding about each person's ideas and feelings. Every person must agree at the very beginning that he/she can agree to disagree and remain respectful of each individual person. Rude behavior is unacceptable in any situation. Helping students and teachers learn this will be useful in a well-managed classroom and for experiences outside the school setting.

*EDUCATION IS THE ABILITY TO
LISTEN TO ALMOST ANYTHING
WITHOUT LOSING YOUR TEMPER
OR YOUR SELF-CONFIDENCE.*

ROBERT FROST

Chapter Six

Values: Optimists or Pessimists

Values education is helping students learn who they are, and what they stand for, as well as what they will not stand for. What are our values based upon? Developing positive character traits just means that students respect themselves, others, and people around the world. Having a good positive attitude can certainly be useful. Obtaining and using a positive attitude can be difficult because there are people in the world who are pessimistic and never see anything good. They only concentrate on the negative. When a positive attitude is developed the person chooses to be an optimist with a much stronger and better outlook on life. The following information come from the book, *What Do You Stand For? A Kid's Guide to Building Character*, by Barbara Lewis. Guiding students to a better understanding of these character traits is something teachers do all the time, and this book offers excellent ideas about doing this.

Being an optimist and keeping a positive attitude is not always easy. Dr. Deepak Chopra, M.D. made the following quote several years ago, and it has become quite popular in the United States. The quote says, "You accept things as they are, not as you wish they were in this moment...The past is history, the future is a mystery, and this moment is a gift. That is why this moment is called the present." Optimists accept and go forward while pessimists become victims.

Telling students the truth about positive attitudes will get them through difficult situations. It does not mean they will never suffer loss, experience pain, or disappointments. People with positive attitudes will not ignore or pretend problems do not exist. Learning to accept what they can and learning to accept what they cannot change is not an easy task, but it can be learned and experienced. I used to tell my students a story about Thomas Jefferson. I do not know it is true or not, but when I read it, but I believed that he could have said this, "When I get angry, I count to ten, when I get very angry, I count to one hundred before I say anything." I have found this to be very good advice.

There are so many gloomy people in the world today. I discovered as a beginning teacher that many of these people are teachers and students. After spending time with them, I found that I was becoming a gloomy person as well. This did not feel right to me because I am usually a cheerful person. I tried saying something positive for every negative thing a person said to me, and they only came back with something else that was negative. Not to be deterred I decided I would always smile at people say kind things to them and never say another negative things.

Most students would ask, "Why should we waste our time on them?" I would answer, "Because that might be the only smile or kind thing they hear today." These are such simple things that everyone can do, and they help build our character without tearing another person's character down. Remaining enthusiastic can be catching, and you never know who will get it.

A sense of humor is always important, as I have said before. It is an amazing way to demonstrate that it is one of life's greatest joys. Learning to laugh at yourself when something silly happens allows students to know that you are human after all. I love to share silly things that I have done. These were the kinds of stories that allowed the students to understand that teachers could do crazy things as well. I had so many different ones to share over the years, and I heard many funny ones from my students as well. These were learning experiences as much as core curriculum practices.

Being a good sport is also a quality to having a positive attitude. I kept a small plaque on my desk that read, "It is not if you win the game; it is how you play." We had many discussions about this. Learning to win and lose gracefully are wonderful attributes. Yes, we would all love to win, but when we lose, we should learn to do so gracefully. It does not mean that we did not try our best.

Gratitude is another good positive attitude. Learning to be thankful for our families, friends, what we have, and all the other blessings in our lives. When people are grateful, these are usually very happy people. It does not mean they have everything thing they want, but they are thankful for what they do have.

Another trait that we need is faith. This could mean believing in God or another higher being or higher power. Faith cannot be seen or heard, but it is something that we feel that can either helps us succeed or fail. The Ute Indian nation has a saying, "When the legends die, the dreams die. When the dreams die, there is no greatness." If you have faith that you

are going to achieve goals, you more than likely will do it. It has taken me almost twenty years to achieve my doctorate, but I have finally completed it.

Hope is the next trait, but probably the most important. Without hope there is no meaning.

We all have to have hope, or we will never achieve our dreams or goals. Life would be hopeless without any meaning. Emily Dickinson said, "Hope is the thing with feathers--- That perches on the soul---And sing the tune without words---And never stops at all---at all---"

Caring is another great characteristic. Caring involves giving, service, sharing, love, helpfulness, kindness, generosity, unselfishness, and sacrifice. Learning to serve others does not come naturally. We must learn to accept other people and reach out to them when the need arises, expecting nothing in return. Serving with free and open hearts is very important. Diana Princess of Wales summed it up very nicely, "Someone's got to get out there and love people and show it."

Citizenship is activism, participation, community service, the love of freedom, and patriotism. These are things that are not taught, so how does a teacher help his/her students learn to understand how important these ideas are to have and use in their lives. When I would go to vote, I would always wear the sticker they gave me at the poll stating that I had voted. Students would always ask whom did I vote for, and I told them that no one had to share the person or persons they voted for unless they chose to do so. I did encourage all of them to register to vote when they became eighteen years of age because

then they could have a say in their government. Voting is a privilege, and they should all take advantage of having this opportunity.

Being active in the government could lead to many different roles in which they could participate. I had a student who decided that he would run for the school board several years ago. He contacted me and told me that he remembered what I had said about becoming an active participant in our government, and he felt he had some new ideas that would be helpful in our school district. Unfortunately, he lost, but he said he was not giving up because he felt he would be able to make a difference.

Many of my former students have participated in community service programs. They have worked with the summer lunch program for students, they have helped paint murals on the walls of our down town buildings to make our city more beautiful, and they have volunteered at the nursing homes to help with the elderly. I am filled with such pride when I hear about all the wonderful things these students are accomplishing.

I have had many of the young men and ladies in my classes who are now serving in the military. I am so thankful for these students. I shared a personal story with them about my uncle who was killed on Iwo Jima during World War II. I never had the opportunity to meet him because he was killed before I was born. I could share how eager he was to join the Marines and fight for his country. I brought the flag that was presented to my grandparents in honor of him for them to see; I felt so proud to share this story with them.

There are always things that we can do to be good citizens, and I feel that I helped my students learn these things from experiences that we shared in our classroom. I always

gave them the opportunity to share their opinions and observations, which gave them an even better understanding of what being a good citizen means.

Asking student what they stand for and believe will certainly help them to begin to think about the things they will support, and the things they will not support. In Barbara Lewis's book she gives first hand accounts from students across the United States described as character in action. It also includes pictures of these young people, and helps students to understand these students are just like them. Each section begins with several quotes from people who have made an impact on that particular situation in their own lives. One chapter deals with choice and accountability. Ms. Lewis gives a quote from Robert F. Bennett, "Your life is the sum result of all the choices you make, both consciously and unconsciously. If you can control the process of choosing, you can take control all the aspects of your life. You can find freedom that comes from being in charge of yourself." This quote has so much meaning and truth. When young people can learn this, they can start on the road to becoming a better person.

Ms. Lewis covers the following topics in this wonderful book: citizenship, cleanliness, communication, conversation, courage, empathy, endurance, forgiveness, health, imagination, honesty, integrity, justice, respect, responsibility, safety, self-discipline, and wisdom. Any teachers can certainly get some inspiring ideas from this book. Her introduction includes a quote from Nelson Mandela, "It's not our weaknesses that frighten us. It's our strengths." Assisting students in learning the meaning of this great quote is the one of the main purposes of the book.

None of us are perfect individuals, but we all possess strong, positive character traits that can be developed and used. As educators this is important for us to help our students learn by sharing and role modeling, but they should also be an essential part of this curriculum.

*EDUCATION HAS REALLY ONE BASIC
FACTOR, A SINE QUA NON--YOU
MUST WANT IT.*

GEORGE EDWARD WWOODBERRY

Chapter Seven

Teaching by the Standards

Some beginning teachers and veteran teachers might be wondering why I would devote a chapter to Professional Standards. It is because these standards are also a part of a teacher's life. These are guidelines that every educator in the State of Georgia must abide by to retain their teaching certificates and have them renewed. My first principal told me to become familiar with these standards because there might come a day when I would need them. This is why I know that every beginning teacher should be informed and veteran teachers reminded what rules and ethics we must follow.

Teaching by the standards, these are words that every beginning teacher will hear throughout his/her entire educational process. What are the standards in the State of Georgia? These standards come from the Professional Standards Commission. This agency sets and applies guidelines for the preparation, certification, and continued licensing of public educators in the State of Georgia. In July, 1991, a legislative mandate created the Georgia Professional Standards Commission as a separate government agency, which would not be a part of the Georgia Department of Education. The primary responsibility was to create a certification/licensing process that would be responsible for the following:

To simplify and make more efficient the process of certifying education personnel in Georgia;

To attract the highest possible number of qualified personnel to become educators in Georgia;

To promote the hiring of qualified educators from other states to work in Georgia schools;

To improve the level of preparation of educators, both pre-service and in-service by requiring the purposes of certification those essential skills, and the knowledge needed to deliver effective educators;

To adopt standards of professional performance and a code of professional ethics for educators, both of which shall represent standards of performance and conduct, which are generally accepted by the educators of this state;

To investigate reports of specified criminal conduct, violations of certain rules, regulations, and policies by system educators;

To enforce the requirement that local school systems promptly report specified criminal conduct of school system educators to the commission;

To impose disciplinary action or denial of a certificate against an educator;

These responsibilities lie with the enforcement of the GaPSCo (Georgia Professional Standards Commission which can be found under their web site).

These are just the main topics. There are pages of information that define in detail each topic that was listed.

As a novice teacher, I was somewhat overwhelmed by all of these standards. They were covered step-by-step in a Beginning Teacher Seminar I was required to attend,

Next came the Code of Ethics for educators. There were:

- Legal Compliances
- Conduct with Students
- Alcohol or Drugs
- Honesty
- Public Funds and Property
- Remunerative Conduct
- Confidential Information
- Abandonment of Contract
- Required Reports
- Professional Conduct and Testing

Once again I have just listed the main topics. I was beginning to think I had chosen the wrong profession. I knew that I would have not problem complying with these rules, regulations, and codes, but what would happen if I was falsely accused? I was naïve enough to believe that I would do what I always did, and it was simple; just tell the truth. My sweet grandmother used to tell us all the time, “The truth will stand when the worlds on fire!” I never understood it at the time, but now I certainly do.

Yes, educators should be held to a high degree of accountability because we are teaching the most prized commodity in our world are our children, but I wonder when we became specimens under a magnifying glass, and we began to feel as if we could no longer treat our students as the unique and wonderful creatures they are.

Was I wrong to hug my students? Was it wrong for me to answer appropriate questions with regards to sex? What it wrong for me to correct a student who was behaving inappropriately? Would I say something that students could take the wrong way? The questions in my mind just went on and on until I finally came to the decision that I could not worry about these things. I would just be the best teacher I could be, and that was all I could do.

I was in a different position than most beginning teachers because I was married, had a child, and I had also had a previous profession before getting my teaching degrees. This gave me the opportunity to appreciate the parents' point of views. I also understood that many students would twist things around, so the blame did not lie with them but the teacher. My daughter had done the same thing to us on some occasions, and then we sat down with the teacher and our daughter to discuss what had happened, we were better able to understand both sides.

I have had children who I did not like the actions they displayed. This is what we always told our daughter, "We will always love you until the day we die, but we do not always have to like your actions or behaviors." When parents and teachers meet they should always try to remember this.

Parker J. Palmer wrote a paper in 1997, "The Heart of a Teacher: Identity and Integrity in Teaching. In his paper Mr. Palmer begins by stating, "I am a teacher at heart, and there are moments in the classroom when I can hardly hold the joy." He explains that while these

moments are treasured; there are other times when he feels that his teaching is just a sham.

He says that teachers hold a mirror, and educators should be willing to look in that mirror and not run from what they see. We have the opportunity to gain self-knowledge, and knowing ourselves is crucial to good teaching as knowing our students and the subject we teach. He shares a secret, which is hidden in plain sight; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.

Moral universalism is the meta-ethical positions that some systems of ethics applies universally to all people regardless of culture, race, religion, nationality, sex, sexuality, or other distinguishing features. The source of justification of this system may be thought for instance, human nature, shared vulnerability to suffering, the demands of universal reason, what is common among existing moral codes, or the commands of God. It is the opposing positions to various forms of moral relativism, ("The Character First!", Bulleting Series, Character Training Institute, 2008). The following are 49 Character Qualities that give people a wide range of choices to choose the behaviors that reflect their characters:

Alertness	Diligence	Humanity	Security
Attentiveness	Discernment	Initiative	Self-Control
Benevolence	Discretion	Joyfulness	Sensitivity
Cautiousness	Enthusiasm	Loyalty	Thoroughness
Compassion	Faith	Meekness	Thriftiness
Contentment	Flexibility	Obedience	Tolerance

Creativity	Forgiveness	Orderliness	Truthfulness
Decisiveness	Generosity	Patience	Virtue
Dependability	Honor	Resourcefulness	Wisdom
Determination	Hospitality	Responsibility	

These qualities and their definitions can be found in "The Character First!" Pocket Guide.

This is an outstanding list of character qualities that we should strive to possess.

The history of moral universalism is supported a wide range of thinkers and traditions that have supported universalism in one form or another from the ancient Platonists and Stoics, through Christians, to modern Kantian, human rights, and utilitarian thinkers. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights is an example of moral universalism,

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morall> universalism)

Teachers who have good morals should definitely have good ethics as well. I always told my husband and daughter that if I came home from school, and I had more negatives to tell than positives; I wanted them to tell me, "It is time for you to retire." When educators can no longer help their student to learn, show them the compassion and love they so desperately need, share in their successes and disappointments, and be someone they can admire and respect, these educators should not be in the classroom.

I thank the Good Lord every day that I never reached that point in my teaching career. I loved my students, and I continue to love them today. When I see the accomplishments so many of them have made, I stop and think to myself, "I had a part in their achieving that, and I am thrilled."

Possessing these character qualities will always help teachers along the way, I have the Teacher Support Specialist endorsement. This allowed me to work with student teacher. I always gave them a copy of the 49 Character Qualities and told them they could face any situation with boldness, and they should never fear the guidelines and practices from the Professional Standards Commission because they would be equipped.

I realize that times have changed, and people have changed, but what happened to the Golden Rule along the way? When we treat others, as we want to be treated there should never be any problems. Unfortunately, we can no longer rely on that rule today. That is why the Professional Standards Commission had to create all these rules for ethical and moral behaviors. While it is important to remember these ethical and moral rules, we must never forget that we have students to help learn. This should always be the primary objective for any educator whether beginning or veteran. When we achieve this goal, we will have completed an outstanding task.

I have relatives and friends who live teach in Alabama, Florida, and Tennessee who I have asked to read the standards from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission, and most of them agree; they have very similar guideline in their states as well. We all agree that the 49 Character Qualities, if followed should prevent any problems. They are not miracles, but they certainly can be useful.

The one thing all teachers should remember is that we are teachers twenty-four hours a day, seven day a week. If we are seen doing anything that is inappropriate outside the privacy of our home, and even then we must be careful; we can have charges brought

against us. If teachers are not willing to comply with these standards, they should select another profession. Once the scrutiny begins, it can be a never-ending process. This is why teachers are held to a higher accountability.

*IN EDUCATION OF CHILDREN THERE
IS NOTHING LIKE ALLURING ALL THE INTEREST
AND AFFECTION; OTHERWISE YOU ONLY
MAKE SO MANY ASSES LADEN WITH BOOKS.*

MICHEL EYQUEM DE MONTAIGNE

Chapter Eight

The Difficulties of Lesson Planning

As a novice teacher, I had to write lesson plans for each week. I would write them on Friday, or before, turn them in to my principal, and wait for him to come observe my classroom teaching and management. The guidelines I had to follow are much different today.

I had a textbook for the different subjects that I taught, a set of Professional Standards' guidelines, and Quality Core Curriculum numbers that had to address each objective that I taught. If I was teaching a unit on a particular unit such as American Indians, I would usually do two to three weeks of lesson plans at a time because it usually took that long for me to cover such an extensive unit. If I was able to complete the lessons before hand, or if it took longer, I would always tell my administrator when he came to observe me, so that he would know where I was with my planning.

Things have change drastically since those days. The lesson plans now have to be prepared according to the guidelines that deal with time management. You have so many minutes to introduce the lesson, so many minutes to teach the lesson, so many minutes to answer questions from the students, and so many for the closing of the lesson. While I do believe that time management is good, teachers are so concerned with being exactly on time for different parts of their lessons that somewhere good or even excellent teaching is lost. What if your administrator comes into your classroom, and you are just teaching the lesson

when you should be closing? Is the world going to stop spinning? Students should be learning how to learn not how fast each objective can be covered during class.

I have a real problem with these particular guidelines because while some lessons can be taught using them, others require more time. This time allow the students to become fully engaged in the lesson and really begin to learn. Should you tell the students, “I’m sorry; I don’t have time to explain that any further. See me after class, and I can give you a couple of minutes then.” This is so unfair because the student feels neglected, the teacher feels frustrated, and no one comes out a winner.

I met a former student the other day at the grocery store, and she told me that so many students were not learning as much as they could since they were so rushed from class to class. She reminded me of the time in my class when we were studying Greek and Roman mythology. She went on to say that she loved that class because I never made anyone feel rushed. I took the time to answer questions and help students locate other information they wanted to learn. This made me feel so happy because she could remember so much about the things I helped her learn. Helping students learn to learn and want to learn even more is what real teaching is all about.

Many of the people who are members of this commission have never even been in a classroom. If they could just visit a few classrooms for several days in a row, not just one day at a time, they could see how ridiculous many of these “new” ideas to improve learning are. The ridiculousness of some of their ideas is absurd. A former student who is now a sophomore in college wrote a scathing account of the manner in which our children are

being taught. He was so insightful. He said that he felt cheated in many ways because his teachers were so busy following the rules and guideline; no real learning or teaching occurred.

I never thought I would have to spend my days in the classroom watching the clock to be sure that I was on task. I am so glad that I retired when I did from the public system because I would have been written up every time an administrator came to my classes for I would have never been on time. My time would be for the students and their needs.

Learning to prepare lesson plans that will keep your students excited and motivated to learn is a tremendous challenge. I always wanted my students to actively participate in each lesson. Teaching English with reading gave me the opportunity to do this in a combined effort. However, I feel that if teachers were allowed to teach without having to watch the clock, lessons would be so much better. Learning is important, and when we take the time to really teach, learning can also be fun.

*ANY PLACE THAT ANYONE
CAN LEARN SOMETHING USEFUL
FROM SOMEONE WITH EXPERIENCE IS
AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION.*

AL CAPP

Chapter Nine

Is Continuing Education Important?

My husband tells me that I will probably die with a book in my hands, which will be all right with me. I have loved to read and learn for most of my life. That is one of the reasons that when I began my teaching career, I wanted to earn all the degrees I could. This was not always easy since I also had to work during this time, but I learned early on; where there is a will; there is a way. I would take one or two college courses during the regular school term, and I would take as many as I could during the summer break. I also taught summer school for several years while I was doing this. Now, I do not want anyone's sympathy because I was doing exactly what I wanted to do. No one made or forced me; it was my choice. Not everyone has this desire to learn, but I did. I have always wanted to be able to carry on a conversation with anyone I met, and becoming a good learner enabled me to do this. Of course, my favorite topics are English and reading, but I can hold my ground with other topics as well.

Teachers have to take in-service classes each year to continue the renewal of our teaching certificates. While many of these classes were helpful and informative, I felt that many of them were a waste of my time. As a student, I could always tell when a teacher was prepared because we were so involved with what was being taught. In other classes, we were just given busy work to fill in the time. I found these classes to be annoying. I wanted

to learn something that I could share with my students. I did not consider these instructors real teachers because they did not teach.

The college classes that I took to earn my different degrees were to the same extent. Those professors who were excited about what they were teaching rubbed off on their students. These classes seemed to fly by, but the classes where the professors were there to simply earn tenure or extra money held no interest for me.

Learning as a teacher helped me understand how important it was for me to be excited about what I was teaching my students. If my classes were going to be meaningful to my students, they had to be meaningful to me. As a student myself, I learned much about the differences between a good teacher, a mediocre teacher, and a bad teacher. I always wanted to be the best I could be.

One of the most interesting classes that I took was focused on the, *Worksheets Don't Grow Dendrites* by Marcia L. Tate. Ms. Tate taught the class. I thought at the beginning that she would just be promoting her book, and I was so wrong. Yes, she did use her book, but she helped us understand why she wrote the book, and why she thought it was so important for teachers to learn this important concept. Her teaching was phenomenal, and her ability to engage all of us in the lessons was remarkable.

Educators should never want to stop learning. Whether you are working toward another degree, taking in-service classes, or just listening to other educators. I belong to the Polk County Association of Retired Educators (PCARE) and the Georgia Association of Retired

Educators (GARE). At these meetings we are always given new information about our statuses as teachers, retiree information, and there is always a guest speaker to share new information with us. These meetings give retired educators the opportunity to stay abreast of anything new that is happening in local as well as state educational policies.

Until I retired I always kept my membership current with the Georgia Association of Educators (GAE) and the local branch as well, which was the Polk County Associate of Educators (PCAEE). I felt that I needed this extra support for any problems that might arise during my teaching career. There are other professional organizations as well, which teachers can join which are in our county and state. I would advise any novice teacher to join one of these organizations because they provide educational forums that teachers need.

I have been a member of Kappa Delta Pi, which is the Honor Society for educators, since the early eighties. This organization is available to all educators who maintain a certain Grade Point Average (GPA) while in school, and it continues as long as you choose to be a member. They provide a magazine called, "The Record", that is filled with a variety of strategies, studies, and articles written by educators for educators. I have enjoyed having the honor of being a member of this organization.

Learning is available to anyone who wants to learn, and with learning you obtain knowledge, and with knowledge you have power, and the power of the mind is a wonderful thing. I kept a poster in my classroom all the years that I taught that stated, "Knowledge Is Power!" I continue to believe this statement.

*THE WORLD'S GREAT MEN HAVE
NOT COMMONLY BEEN GREAT
SCHOLARS, NOR GREAT SCHOLARS
GREAT MEN.*

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES SR.

Chapter Ten

Administrators

I have never wanted to be an administrator and let me tell you why. I have worked with some wonderful administrators, and some who were not so wonderful. I realize that many of these people were dedicated to their students, faculty, and staff members, and the school system for which they worked. These were the administrators who I admired and respected. The others who only seemed interested in running their own “little kingdoms” did not stand in high regard with me.

The administrators who let their positions go to their heads were concerned with only themselves, and what was going to make them look good. This did not create a very pleasant working relationship. I have always tried to respect people who were in higher positions than myself, but it was very difficult at times. These administrators never supported their teachers in any situation. The parents and students were always correct, and the teacher was always wrong no matter what. Pleasing the public seemed to take precedence over the teachers. I never quite understood this.

These were people who always liked to hear themselves talk. Attending just one faculty meeting or school assembly would be definitive enough to find this to be true. I must make a little concession for the female administrators because I too am female.

Principals who make it so difficult for their faculty to teach is beyond my comprehension. Sending other teachers into your classroom to make sure you are not doing anything out of order is ridiculous. Most of the teachers who came into my classroom had many less year's teaching experience and a fewer number of degrees than me, and yet they were there to determine if I was doing anything wrong. This is such an injustice to most veteran teachers who were being punished because parents and students had made false claims.

When administrators came to my classroom to make suggestions for teaching my classes seemed to be the "straw that broke the camel's back". They were not making any new suggestions that I had not seen or heard during my twenty-six years of teaching. While I tried to be receptive to their suggestions, I finally had to say to the assistant principal, "You come and teach and this writing class, and I will do your job." There were no further comments from this person.

A student purposefully ran into me and knocked me backwards, and luckily, there was a white board behind me that kept me from falling. I have had five back surgeries due to the chemotherapy that I had taken for my cancer. This had compromised my skeletal system, so my being knocked in this manner was not conducive to my medical condition.

I wrote a pink slip for this student, and I sent it to administration. It was also reported to our school's resource officer. Several students were called to witness what they had seen, and their stories concurred with mine. My husband and daughter were so upset that this had happened, and they wanted me to report it to our local police department as battery. I assured them that the school would handle the situation fairly. Was I ever wrong? The

assistant principal came to talk with me as well as the resource officer, and I was informed that there was not enough information for the school to file charges. The student was given Out of School Suspension for three days and In School Suspension for five days. After all this, the student returned to my class and bragged that, "I had been gotten." It was treated as a big joke on me. I felt sure the student would at least be removed from my class, but that did not happen, and the inappropriate behavior continued. I finally just sent this student out in the hall every day, so that I could teach the class without any interruptions. I felt as if the other students in the class were being punished, because I had to devote so much time to this student.

I discussed this behavior with other colleagues, and they reported the same behavior in their classes as well from this student. None us received the help that we so desperately needed. This was poor management on the part of these administrators. This was only one isolated incidence that occurred before I retired, and I finally realized that I would have to deal with it to the best of my ability. I have always wanted to help students learn, but as the old saying goes, "You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink."

The good administrators that I had the pleasure to work with were outstanding. They had the interest of the students, parents, and faculty as their main objectives. There were intelligent, good managers, fair, and always kind. Did always agree with me? No! Yet we had the understanding that we could agree to disagree and continue to be respectful and kind to each other.

These people also had great senses of humor. These were the administrators who truly cared about everyone they worked with and for. They managed every situation in a professional and business like manner, and for this I will always be grateful. If I ever did want to be in administrations, I would hope to be the type of administrator these people were to me. Mixing the bad with the good, I suppose I have had it easy compared to some other frightening tales I have heard about situations in other schools. Even the administrators who I did not feel were as intelligent, kind or respectful, seemed better than others I had heard about.

Superintendents are another different breed of characters. They are motivated by politics, which are mandated by our Board of Education. The people on the Board of Education in our county are elected officials. Anyone can throw his/her hat in the ring, pay the qualifying fees, and run for the office in their district. They do not have to have any particular experience with managing schools. Once they decide to run, they can remain in office as long as they continue to be voted for by their constituents.

These board members elected the superintendents in our county. We have had some excellent superintendents and some not so good. They did not have to reside in this county to be chosen. They did have to move to our county if chosen. The parents, county resident, and teachers have no input with this process. I personally feel that these positions should be voted upon by the entire county, or perhaps we should just let the State of Georgia Board of Education put someone in place for us with limited terms. I know there are many

people who would disagree with me about this, but I believe that everyone who pays school taxes should have a voice.

People, who are working or serving in positions for education, should have some experience in this field. After all the years of doing the same old thing, I think we should at least give this process a try. If it does not work, try something else. As you can understand, being an administrator is something I never want to be. I feel that I am prejudiced when it comes to good and bad administrators. After having worked with several principals and superintendents, I believe I have a pretty good concept about how they should behave while holding that position. As a teacher there were times I felt as if I just wanted to give up, and I am sure there are also administrators and superintendents who have felt the same way. Those of us who love our students do not give up. We continue to go forward despite the obstacles.

I know administrators do not have easy jobs, and I would not want to have anyone think that I think they do. There are many excellent administrators who I admire and respect. When administrators truly understand their roles and how to administrate with understanding and compassion, these are our good administrators. They are responsible for many people, and this is not always easy.

EVERYONE WHO REMEBERS HIS OWN
EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE REMEBERS
TEACHERS, NOT METHODS AND TECHNIQUES.

THE TEACHER IS THE KINGPIN OF THE
EDUCATIONAL SITUATION. HE MAKES OR
BREAKS PROGRAMS.

SIDNEY HOOK

Chapter Eleven

Curricular and Extra Curricular Activities

Every school term there were classes and activities in which teachers were required to participate. Sometimes we were given choices, and other times these classes were assigned. The coach prior to me was moving to another school, and since I had been her assistant coach, she asked would I become the coach of the academic team, which I readily accepted. I coached the academic team for twenty-two years, and I loved every minute. The practices were always fun, and the students brought such joy to my heart. The competitions were always exciting and challenging as well as enjoyable. I always told my students that if we won, it would be wonderful, but if we lost, that was all right as well because someone has to win, and someone has to lose. My students were always gracious winners and gracious losers. At the end of the competitions they immediately got up from their chairs to shake hands with the opposing teams, and I was so proud of them for this kind gesture.

I had some students on the academic team for three years (6th, 7th, and 8th grades). We had such a special bond, and I loved it. These were the students who were often looked over because they were not athletic, many of them were very shy, and the only time they were ever recognized was the last day of school when we had our Honor's Program. These were the students who walked away with the awards. I am proud to say that I have a nephew

who has his doctorate, and he is coaching the academic team at the school where he teaches.

The academic team represented our school very well. They won regional and state championships. I will never forget at one of the state championship competitions, I had one of my very quiet students come to me during the break, and he said, “Mrs. Griffin, I believe we are going to win this.” They did win! These are the memories you carry in your heart forever, and you never forget them.

I also directed the drama club for one school term. I never realized what talented students we had in middle school. They were filled with such anticipation, inspiration, energy, and ability. There were students who auditioned for the drama club who I never thought would have had the nerve to do it. I was amazed at their talents! We had such fun performing our one big play. It was a stand up comedy where students did monologues or skits. It was absolutely wonderful watching these students perform. There were also those students who worked back stage with make-up, costumes, lighting, painting backdrops, and all the other things that were needed for the performance to be a success.

I was so pleased when these students continued their work in the drama club when they got to high school. I always went to their plays, and it was so thrilling when they came out after the show to give me hugs. Their director would tell them when I was in the audience, and she would tell me how happy they were that I was there. How can your heart not be touched by these sweet remembrances?

Another group I coached was the pep team. I did this for three school terms. There were the girls who did not make the cheerleading squad but so desperately wanted to cheer. They got to wear uniforms, use pom-poms, and go to all the pep rallies and ball games. These girls were great! In fact the cheer leading coaches made recommendations for some of them to compete in high school for the cheerleading squad. It was great to see how their confidence and skills grew. Many of them did go on to become cheerleaders in high school, and some of them made the dance line team for the marching band.

I also sponsored the writing and speech competitions for our school for twenty years. These students always inspired me with their abilities to write and give speeches. The first year I sponsored these programs a sixth grade boy wrote a composition that blew my mind. The topic was: "Write About Yourself as Some Inanimate Object and How Your Life Would Be." His composition was titled, "I Am a Rock". It was one of the most informative, inspirational, and funny essays I had ever read. The judges were also impressed that someone so young had this ability. I am very proud to say that this young man is now a lawyer, and we continue to be in touch. This was just one of the many essays that caused me to be touched in such special ways. I have laughed, cried, and never ceased to be amazed at the writing talent we had in our school.

The speeches were also excellent. I had students who would say, "Mrs. Griffin, I can't get up in front of people and give a speech. Let me just come in one day after school and say it to you." I allowed them to do this, but after hearing their speeches, I convinced them to give them in class, then the entire school, next the district competition, and finally the state

competition. Many of these students won first, second, and third places at the state level. Needless to say, I was proud beyond belief. Once they realized that the spoken word was just as important as the written word, they were amazing speech givers.

One year I was assigned to mentor a group of sixth grade boys. Every teacher was assigned a different group, and the groups were all comprised of same sex students. The first day I had these boys; one little boy raised his hand and said, "There are no girls in this class." To which I responded, "Yes, there is." He looked around and said, "Well, I don't seen any girls." I then told him to look around the classroom again and find a girl. He continued to say, "There are no girls in this classroom. Finally, I asked him this question, "Well, who do you think I am?" His reply, "You are a woman not a girl."

At the beginning of this semester, I did not want to mentor sixth grade boys, but it was one of the best learning experiences I ever had. Those little guys warmed my heart, made me laugh, and made me cry. They would just pour their little hearts out to me, and they were so sincere. All they wanted was for someone to listen to them without making any constraints. I answered questions when I could and offered advice when asked.

No, we did not have any assigned curriculum, but we did have what I call the curriculum of the heart. These fellows left an imprint on my heart that I will never forget because some things are just too precious to forget.

*THE BUBBLE IS SO IRIDESCENT
OR FLOATS LONGER THAN THAT BLOWN
BY THE SUCCESSFUL TEACHER.*

SIR WILLIAM OSLER

Chapter Twelve

Teaching, a Wonderful Profession

My mother wanted all three of her daughters to become teachers, and she told my older sister, my twin sister, and I this all of our lives. She said it was such a good profession because you could always be home with your children when they were not in school, and you got all that time off during the school term as well as a nice summer break. While I can appreciate my mother's wise advice, I did not follow it nor did my older sister or my twin sister.

My twin sister, June, and I became Candy Stripers when we were in the eighth grade, and we fell in love with the medical profession. When we graduated high school, we both went in training and became proud members of the medical field. I loved it. It was one of the most exciting professions I could have ever chosen. I trained and worked at one of the largest hospitals in Atlanta, Georgia, and I learned and saw things that I never imagined seeing and learning.

I loved the emergency room work. You never knew from one minute to the next what would be happening. It seemed that I had barely gotten to work when it was time for me to leave. I got to work with some outstanding doctors. One was Dr. J. Willis Hurst who was President Lyndon B. Johnson's cardiologist. I have a copy of Dr. Hurst's book, *The Heart*, which I will always cherish. Another area that I really enjoyed was working in the cardiac

catheterization laboratory, which was my last job in the medical field. I loved the field of cardiology, and this was an exciting job for me as well.

I sustained an injury while at this job, and I could no longer do what I loved doing. I moped around for about a year and even started a balloon business where I was Belle the Clown. I truly enjoyed this because I did birthday parties for children. I was actually quite popular and was asked to be in local parades and to perform at different festivals. As enjoyable as this was, I continued to feel that I was not doing what I really should be doing.

I took a job at the middle school in Rockmart as a teaching assistant, and I knew from the first day; I wanted to be a teacher. I came home and discussed this with my husband and daughter. They gave me their approval and full support. I started working on my certification classes that spring semester.

I continued to work the entire time I was completing my under graduate, Masters, and Educational Specialists degrees. I would always take two classes during the school term, and then I would carry a full load each summer. Without the support of my family, I would not have been able to do this. My husband or daughter would go with me to the classes that required driving at night, and sometimes these classes would be seventy-five miles one way. My daughter loved going with me because she got to sit in the lobby or lounge with the college students.

I was talking with my mother one day about teaching, and she told me, “Well, if you had listened to me, you would have been a teacher years ago.” That was one of those, “I told you so” moments.

I never realized how rewarding teaching could be until I was in that position. Do I regret the years I spent in the medical field? "No!" I learned so much that I also used in my teaching. Before we had school nurses, my first principal always sent students to me who had any medical issues. He always laughed and told me he got two for the price of one.

Teaching, I knew I had found my niche, and I wanted to remain there.

*MY JOY IN LEARNING IS PARTLY
THAT IT ENABLES TO TEACH.*

SENECA

Chapter Thirteen

Would I Recommend Teaching as a Career?

When I first started teaching, I would have immediately answered, “Yes,” to this question. Reflecting upon the teaching standards and guidelines in today’s schools, I really don’t know what I would say to someone who asks should they become a teacher.

I have several former students who are teachers, and many who are studying to become teachers. I am so proud of them for choosing teaching as a career, but I truly hope they understand the differences in the schools today versus their school days. It can be a challenge, and I wish them all continued successes. They are all so eager to become a part of this wonderful field.

Would I want to teach in the public system again today? My answer would have to be, “No!” I could not go into a classroom and have no interaction with my students other than with technology. Now, please don’t get me wrong, I think technology is wonderful (when it works), but I do not believe it will ever replace the one on one atmosphere that is accomplished with a teacher and her students. This would be one of the things that I would miss the most, and I would also dislike the fact that novice teachers would be missing out on this as well.

Many people would say this is the old fashioned concept about teaching, and they would be right. The thing that I think about is that my parents were taught the old fashioned way, my older sister was taught the old fashioned way, and I was taught the old fashioned way,

and we all have great educational backgrounds. I did not have to take any remedial classes in college which I think speaks very highly of my educational background. Many of the students graduating today have to take remedial classes before they can even begin their college careers.

What is the cause of this problem? Was technology too much a part of their education? Were the teachers inadequate? Were the students responsible? Where does the answer lie? I truly believe that we should go back to some of the basics and make a determination about the way our students are being educated today. A young man, who played football all four years of high school, graduated and could not get accepted to any college because he could not pass the entrance exam. He was unable to read beyond a first grade level. He is now suing his former school system for not teaching him how to read or do any of the other skills necessary to gain admittance to college. I am proud to say this was not my school system. This is happening more and more across the country, and something must be done about this grave situation. The people in our county are beginning to realize that we must vote for school board members with experience, and there must be a system in place where our superintendent is not just elected by the school board.

I loved being a teacher, and I would like to teach on the college level part time. You never stop being a teacher! I plan on being one for the remainder of my life. I just hope and pray all my students who are going into education will feel the same way after teaching for several years.

*ANYONE WHO STOPS LEARNING IS OLD,
WHETHER TWENTY OR EIGHTY. ANYONE
WHO KEEPS LEARNING STAYS YOUNG.
THE GREATEST THING IN LIFE IS TO KEEP
YOUR MIND YOUNG.*

HENRY FORD

Chapter Fourteen

Always Stop, Look, and Listen

Always stop, look, and listen to any helpful advice that you are given. You may or may not use it, but always take advantage of it if you can. I loved receiving many kinds of helpful information whether in a book, a paper, or the spoken word. I don't remember when I found or received the following information, but it had to have been twenty years or longer. I gave copies to my students every school term, and they loved it. It showed them that things were not so different today than they were many years ago.

The following paper was published by Barbara J. Rebbeck who taught eighth grade at Highland Junior High School in Highland, Michigan. She stated "Toward the end of a particular trying day, one of her eighth grade students looked at her with pity and said, "Anyone who wants to be a teacher should also be a candidate for the loony bin." At that moment she said," Harried by the demands of my job; I agreed with him."

Later in a calmer mood, she decided to have her students list traits they thought teachers should have. After all, having survived nine years of teachers, they were certainly experts. Their finished papers included some humorous meanderings, pleas for understanding, and honest insights. Here in their own words are the students' twenty tips for teachers.

20 Tips For Teachers From Students

Asking students what makes good teachers
can produce interesting (and amusing) responses.

By Barbara J. Rebbeck

TOWARD THE END of a particularly trying day, one of my students looked at me and said, "Anybody who wants to be a teacher should also be a candidate for the loony bin." At that moment, harried by the demands of my job, I agreed with him.

Later, in a calmer mood, I decided to have my students list the traits they thought teachers should have. After all, having survived 9 years of us, they were certainly experts. Their finished papers included humorous meanderings, pleas for understanding, and innocent insights. Here in their own words, are my students' 20 tips for teachers.

1. Be mean.

"Most good teachers are mean. Teachers like that practically beat information into your head. Notice when you ask teachers a question how they look at you, giving you the evil eye."

2. Don't be overconfident.

"When teachers brag about how great they are. It is really stupid. Don't tell kids your life story; that's boring."

3. Don't be a ditto-server. Teach something.

"I hate Ditto Queen teachers. Passing out dittos and saying to do them is not what an excellent teacher should do. The teacher should want to teach--not be in it for the money."

4. Don't assign extra work to students who finish early.

"Teachers who assign extra work should be stoned at dawn after trial by inquisition."

5. Be versatile.

"Teachers have to be major league umpires, figure skating judges, and Supreme Court Justices all at the same time."

6. Don't yell.

"Yelling may cause a loss of hearing temporarily."

7. Be patient.

"Remember, patience is a virtue. If teachers did not have patience, they could not teach a student something new, because it would take the student a while to learn how to understand the problem, and by then, the teacher would go insane. Thus, the teacher would beat the children, and they would come out of the class black and blue."

8. Don't give up on students.

"My math teacher waited 15 minutes one but didn't give up on a student when he couldn't find out how many feet were in 18 inches."

9. Let students go to the bathroom.

"Some teachers don't care whether the kids have to go or not--they're not going to the bathroom. So then the kids sit there with their legs crossed."

10. Be supportive and reassuring.

"Teachers should say things like, 'It's okay, Gertrude, Jonny will be fine after we remove the saw blade from her forehead.' 'Don't worry, Ralph. The principal will understand why you firebombed his house.' "

11. Have a sense of humor.

"Getting a teacher with a good sense of humor is like trying to swim the Atlantic Ocean--impossible."

12. Don't leave the classroom.

"Teachers should not be out in the hall talking during class. Students could be fighting or goofing off. A student could easily steal something. A student could even look in the grade book!"

13. Correct papers and make comments.

"Teacher should correct all papers and add comments like, 'Added wrong.' "

14. Walk around and check on students while they work.

"Teachers shouldn't just slump at their desks. My English teacher keeps checking on my work like an eagle watches her young. Because of my fragments."

15. Be qualified in the your subject area.

"Without credentials, a teacher is a nobody. Teachers should at least have a college diploma. They should be taught at the best schools. Like Princeton, Harvard, and so on."

16. Don't ne too intelligent.

"Teachers should not be so smart that it makes me sick, but they should be able to teach something without screwing it up."

17. Use books.

"I knew a science teacher that never gives her students books. All the students ever did in the class was play poker and talk."

18. Don't have favorites.

"Some students are sexist--they prefer girls. Teachers should also try to help the ignorant students as well as the excellent. In fact, the slightest sign of partiality should lead to capital punishment."

19. Don't complain.

"Teachers either complain about how a kid acts or about their salaries."

20. Dress neatly and stay young.

"A good teacher must look neat because students don't want to look at a slob. Teachers today are so old and mean; they should be under 50 years old."

Perhaps all these tips could be summed up in what one student wrote: "If you hate kids, and your fuse cuts quick, don't be a teacher."

Barbara J. Rebbbeck teaches eight-grade English at Highland Junior High School in Highland, Michigan.

While I think many of these tips are funny, teachers should look at some of them very seriously. I like the response to number three. Teachers should always want to teach; not be in it just for the money.

Number four addresses the fact that a teacher should be versatile. If you don't have the ability to wear many different hats, you do not belong in the classroom. This is often a difficult task that is learned by trial and error. This can be very arduous, but it can be done. In all my years of teaching I never yelled at a student. I always felt that I would accomplish much more by speaking in a normal voice. I never used the word shut-up in my class, and I would not allow my students to use that word either. It is a very demeaning and unkind word. Another word I did not use was stupid. This was also a demeaning and hurtful word.

Patience should come with your teaching degree. It truly is a virtue we should strive to have and keep. I learned this lesson when I had cancer. I was always impatient about completing things. Then, when cancer came, my entire life was turned around. Impatience got me nowhere, and I learned that very quickly with surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation treatments. You just have to take one day at a time and do what you can, and those things you cannot do just have to wait. Your priorities certainly change.

Allowing students to go to the bathroom can either be conducive to classroom behavior or not. Even though I could never leave the class to go the bathroom, I had to remember these were middle graders who did not have trained bladders. I tried to allow my students to go one row at a time after I had completed my instructions. You can tell when a child has an

urgent need, especially if you are a parent, and you learn very quickly those who try to fool you.

I loved the response to number ten: be supportive and reassuring. Things will occur where you will need to give reassurance and support. These are things students will never forget.

I feel that I do have a good sense of humor, and I have encouraged my students to develop one as well. Now, there is a time and place for this to be used. Sometimes, using your sense of humor can diffuse a difficult situation. At other times, it will have no value. I tried to help my students learn the difference. I loved the beginning of the school term when student would come to my class and say, "I hear you have a great sense of humor, Mrs. Griffin. Is this true?" I was delighted to say, "Yes, I do!"

If I asked my students to do any work for me, I always graded the papers and made comments. I tried to get tests back as quickly as possible, hopefully by the day. I can remember taking tests in school, and it seemed like weeks before the papers were returned, and sometimes this was the case. Returning them the next day gave students the opportunity to determine what they had done right or wrong, and we went over each question in class. I always put some kind of sticker on each students' papers. Eighth graders love sticker as well!

Walking around your classroom was a requirement of Polk School District many years ago before all the guidelines changed, and there was time in class to do this. It allowed for the

students to ask questions quietly, and you could give that little extra help that was often needed.

Students should never hear a teacher complain, whether it is about a difficult student or your salary. Teachers should always try to remain positive when students are within hearing distance.

It is difficult not to have favorites at times, but I tried very hard to never allow my students to know who they were. I guess I was truly afraid of facing capital punishment!

TO TEACH IS TO TOUCH
LIVES FOREVER.

ANONYMOUS

THE ONLY GOOD TEACHERS FOR YOU ARE
THOSE FRIENDS WHO LOVE YOU, WHO
THINK YOU ARE INTERESTING, OR VERY
IMPORTANT, OR WONDERFULLY FUNNY.

BRENDA UELAND

DON'T TRY TO FIX THE STUDENTS, FIX
OURSELVES FIRST. THE GOOD TEACHER
MAKES THE POOR STUDENT GOOD AND THE
GOOD STUDENT SUPERIOR. WHEN OUR STUDENTS
FAIL, WE, AS TEACHERS, TOO HAVE FAILED.

MARVA COLLINS

Chapter Fifteen

Precious Memories

I decided to contact a few of my former students and ask them the following question, “How would you describe the time you spend with me?” Many of these students I taught over twenty years ago, and some just a couple of years ago. The following are the answers they sent back to me.

“Mrs. Joan Griffin’s classroom was less a place of institutional instruction and more of a cottage filled with flowers and cute kitten trinkets. Poetry papered its walls while the aroma of freshly baked cookies lingered in the air. She used the rules of grammar and managed the class like the ideal mother, never speaking over our heads, being firm when needed, and always conveying through word and deed that she loved us. I now realized through my experiences as an attorney, working daily with the public, that she might have been the only mother that many of my fellow students ever knew. I can only hope that my own child may be fortunate enough to have teachers cut from the same cloth as Mrs.

Griffin.” Tim Taylor

“Mrs. Griffin was my English teacher for three years. She taught me fantastic writing skills and allowed all of her students to read great books of literature for projects. I thoroughly enjoyed learning from Mrs. Griffin and credit my writing skills that I still use today in my

college English courses. Her creative methods of teaching English truly had a positive impact through my entire educational experience and in life.” Kenneth Tyler Dodd

“I had Mrs. Griffin for 8th grade language arts and homeroom. She was so welcoming and created a wonderful environment in her classroom. She was a natural at teaching, and you could tell she really loved what she did. She knew how to keep the class engaged and always kept a smile on her face. She loved her students and always made sure we did our very best to succeed. I remember how she never gave me the chance to slack off and that showed that she cared about me and about my future. Now that I’m in my last semester of college, and working toward my degree in education, I hope to be just as great a teacher to my students as she was to me.” Tara Brooks Burkhalter

“According to Merriam Webster’s Dictionary, an educator is one who is skilled in the art of teaching. This definition describes to the fullest extent my experience in Mrs. Joan Griffin’s classroom. Mrs. Griffin was my eighth grade Honor’s Language Arts instructor at Rockmart Middle School and having her truly enriched my education. It is often said that a truly effective educators will leave lasting effects and impressions on their students. Mrs. Griffin was never one to simply throw information at you, but she always explained an application behind learning a new objective. One objective that sticks out in my mind is when she taught diagramming sentences. At the time, I despised the process of breaking apart and labeling sentences. Although I did not realize it then, the process she taught in this simple

lesson greatly benefited me. I currently work as a substitute teacher across two school systems. I am also pursuing a degree in education from Western Georgia University. I have Mrs. Griffin to thank in many respects for my career endeavors, and the teaching style I have adopted. It is my opinion that the influence and expertise of Mrs. Joan Griffin will be felt long past her years.” Will Dover

“Mrs. Griffin’s classroom will forever be a memorable time for me. I had her for three years in middle school and enjoyed every second of it. From projects to the awesome field trips to even the daily class work, I was constantly learning something. She is definitely a teacher I will never forget.” Jessica Johnson

“What a wonderful teacher, Joan Griffin was! She made sure her classroom as well as herself was always warm and welcoming. Everyday something new was learned, and she made it enjoyable. I’ll always remember Mrs. Griffin.” Michelle Helms Holstein

“Being in Mrs. Griffin’s classroom was one of the most important if not the most important moments of my academic career. As a part of a honors/advanced curriculum, Mrs. Griffin didn’t put my classmates and me through the usual paces. We weren’t taught from the textbook, nor were we given monotonous lectures; however, what we did receive far surpassed what was expected from a typical teacher. Mrs. Griffin would push us to be

better not only inside the classroom but outside the classroom as well. An “A” was not given but earned, and to receive one was to have worked hard and pushed our creative limits. The lessons learned in Joan Griffin’s class, along with the friendship I have with her, still remain with me to this day. She is without a doubt one of the most influential teachers I have ever had.” Dylan Trovilion

“Mrs. Griffin truly cares about students. She consistently believed in me when other educators tore me down. Her teaching always showed students the way the real world operated. Mrs. Griffin changed my outlook on education. With her, I was able to see a more positive view of the job of an educator. Mrs. Griffin made learning interesting. Her classroom was always filled with engaging activities to get the students involved.” Connor Hooper

“I have fond memories of my time in Mrs. Joan Griffin’s classroom. I remember her genuine kindness toward her students and even the gratifying laughter from my desk. Mrs. Griffin made learning fun! She had an ability to administer lessons in a creative way so various students with different modes of learning are able to comprehend. One example was her lesson on speaking well and conducting speeches with confidence where students would be able to be liberated with a voice among their peers. Walking away from that podium strengthened by confidence and built upon by extroverted nature was something I

will never forget. I am now a servant leader in the mortgage industry impacting economics and communities. I supervise a productive team while having weekly speeches during my meetings. I also achieved an English Education degree from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia which I can thank Mrs. Griffin for her influence as an English teacher. I know many of her students, including myself, who are impacting the world because of her impact in the classroom.” Drew S. Miller

“Mrs. Joan Griffin is one of the most influential teachers I have ever had. I had the pleasure of taking a few different subjects from her and was never disappointed a single day in her class. She genuinely cared about her students. Every day was filled with entertaining and clever ways to learn about each subject. I will always be grateful for the knowledge that I received while attending her class. Mrs. Griffin isn’t just a wonderful teacher; she is also a great friend.” Ashley Barfield

“I was a student in Mrs. Griffin’s 8th grade English class for the 1995-1996 school year. English was my least favorite subject, but Mrs. Griffin was one of my favorite teachers. Despite my lack of enthusiasm for English, she always found a way to keep me engaged and motivated to work through my difficulties. Her constant encouragement combined with small group learning enabled me to succeed and prepared me for future English courses. Mrs. Griffin did an excellent job of integrating technology in the classroom, which was more challenging then as opposed to present day. Mrs. Griffin’s dynamic teaching methods, over

qualified knowledge, and genuine concern for her students made her an all too rare commodity in the education system.” Clay Bennett

“Mrs. Griffin’s class was always a joy to go to. Nobody really enjoys the middle school years. It is a tough time of life for all children, especially pre-teen boys. You are awkward, growing into your body, and dealing with feelings you do not understand. That being said, Mrs. Griffin’s class was that one refuge you could always count on to be safe. She was loving and caring to all her student and made the environment feel warm and welcoming. I never liked English or literature as school subjects. Writing and memorizing rules did not come easy to me, but yet I still loved Mrs. Griffin’s class. She taught the subject, but didn’t make you feel dumb if you struggled. She gave extra attention to those who needed it and made the class fun. I still struggle with grammar to this day, but I also still remember a lot of the lessons I learned from her. Many of those lessons, like how to treat others, how to show love and compassion, and how teaching is not just about grading papers, but also changing lives.” Nathan Taylor

"Every student deserves to have a teacher who can inspire something great within a student. So often now, teachers will focus on lessons and giving students rewards for completing an assignment. You know you have found a great teacher, when that teacher fosters your intrinsic motivations and love for a subject. Those teachers can be few and far between, but for three years in middle school I was blessed to have Mrs. Griffin as my English language arts teacher. The lessons were rigorous, and because of this I felt as if I

was being guided to my absolute best. She not only cared about each and every one of her students, but she really focused on helping us find our voices. I didn't realize at the time that those three years I spent catering to reading, writing in the way that I did in her class would flourish into a love for both. Now, I don't need a class to help me write, I write because I love the feeling of creating sentences that flow together into stories. I write to help me think through thoughts and new ideas. This passion that I have all stems from the invaluable lessons that I received from showing up every day and allowing myself to be inspired by Mrs. Griffin." Jamie Anne Conway

A teacher's life, my life, is what all of these former students so eloquently stated about me. I feel so very humble reading all their kind remarks, but I know that I helped each of them, not only with grammar and literature, but how to live their lives to the fullest. For that, I am honored to have been their teacher. This is what a teacher's life is all about. It is not the accolades or even put downs, but it is when real learning occurs, and students can take these ideas and concepts with them the remainder of their lives. For this I am truly grateful to have been their teacher. This is definitely what *A Teacher's Life* is all about.

The quotes at the beginning of each chapter are from the book, *Teachers Have Class: A Tribute*,

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This book was a precious gift from my nephew, Laine Pierce.