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October 22, 2015

# The One Reason I Quit Teaching



([https://elonaschreiner.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/123\\_123.jpg](https://elonaschreiner.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/123_123.jpg))

September means apples, bulletin boards, foliage, name tags, a new class and everything else about going back-to-school! After over thirty years of starting the fall in a classroom, as a student or teacher, I decided to take a break this year. I taught for thirteen years all over Oregon, and it was not an easy decision to take a year off from teaching. We moved from Oregon to Texas and I knew that now was the time to step back. It's now been two months since school started for the rest of my world, and I have had time reflect upon the decision to change careers. I can now articulate the many things I miss about teaching and the one thing that I do not.

Growing up, I always wanted to be a teacher. There were moments when I saw myself as a lawyer, a rodeo cowgirl, a photojournalist, a ballerina, a public speaker, and of course, a queen. I loved helping others, loved teaching others! I read books to younger kids, made my own neighborhood newspaper, created worksheets for my brother to complete and just knew I wanted to be a teacher!

Reading books with kids; discussing the literature, really listening to children's connections to the story, are some of the best times one can have as a teacher. I learned so much about the power of great books, the right books and the deep connections to literature by what my students have said over the years.

A fifth grade student in my class was reading "Hatchet" by Gary Paulsen as part of a book club in my classroom. We were sitting as a small group discussing the book one day in class. This child told the group that he really connected with the main character, Brian, and his anger. Brian had a lot of anger at his parents for divorcing. My student went on to tell the group that he was relieved at Brian's anger, it made him feel like he wasn't the only one who felt this way at his parents' divorce. He said that he had felt like he was the only one with parents who were no longer together, until he read about Brian and his intense feelings. This was an incredibly important turning point for this student, he was able to talk to his parents about his feelings after reading just a few chapters of this book.

In another book club, one of the small groups was reading a collection of short stories about children who survived the Holocaust. At the end of the book, I gave the kids a choice of final projects. One sixth-grade student chose to write a letter to Hitler, and then read it aloud to the class. He read this letter, equating Hitler and several other infamous war criminals (Bin Laden, Hussein) as playground bullies. He informed these ‘bullies’ that the only reason they were allowed to rise in power was because there were too many bystanders. He reassured these terrible men in history that he never be a bystander, he would stand up. This sixth grade student delivered an amazing speech that not only took the power away from these historical figures, but made a call to action of his classmates. He told a class of twenty-six children that we would have another Holocaust, another war, another 9/11, unless we all stood up and stopped letting bullies get away with treating people poorly. He then looked right at me and thanked for introducing him to his favorite book. The room was silent, the children knew the gravity in which he had spoke. They didn’t clap. They thanked him.

Those are just two stories of the hundreds, thousands of life-changing moments that my students gave me. I have tears in my eyes just writing about these kids. Every child teaches you something, about the world, about yourself, about the future. Good teachers learn from this and continue to make positive changes in their little world, which then has ripple effects into the community and world at large.

So why did I leave? Clearly, it means a lot to me to be a teacher. People assume that maybe the kids were too much, or the parents were a lot, or the pay was too low, or any number of reasons that have been trivialized on memes and complained about on Facebook. Taking a hiatus from teaching didn’t have anything to do with any of those reasons.

Children are the best part of teaching; they are hilarious, spirited, adventuresome, silly, loving and grateful! Teaching a child something and when you see them put it all together to take ownership of the learning, is incredible. It’s more than just seeing they understand how to add fractions, it’s witnessing the confidence they gain from knowing they CAN do it. They learn something about themselves, that is what’s important.

The parents in my classes have been very supportive. In my experience, I have seen that all parents love their children. They demonstrate this in different ways, and giving them the room to be able to do that is important as a teacher. Parents need to know that you care about their child as an individual, a learner and the little person that they are becoming. At one of my schools, I would get a lot of new students into class because the population at my school was quite transient. One day, I was told that I was getting a new student about ten minutes before he arrived. His mom and baby brother walked him to my class, which was already in session. He was very shy and clearly didn’t want his mom to leave. I made a spot for her and the baby at one of my tables in the back of the room. She seemed as unwilling to leave as her son was to have her leave. When it was snack time, I was chatting with my new student and his mother. I reassured her what our schedule was and what time she could pick up her son. At the end of the school day, she told me that two weeks ago, her newborn baby had died and that they had had to move to over 500 miles away for her husband’s job. I was blown away. I thought she was a helicopter parent who just needed to be around her child too much. I told her that she could stay as long as she wanted, and for two weeks, she did stay at school all day every day. But after two months, her son was coming to school by himself and happily running around with new friends at recess. Working with caring parents like her make teaching wonderful.

The solitary reason that I chose to leave teaching has to do with the politicized environment of education. People may wonder what politics have to do with teaching, and the answer is everything. When policies are made, the impacts come into our lives and change them drastically. Over the past few years, there has been widespread “educational reform.” These reforms have increased the importance of

spreadsheets, columns of data, evaluations by inexperienced observers, and the accounting of data in every teacher's life. The focus has gone away from people; students, parents, teachers, staff, volunteers, and onto data. The most important elements of teaching cannot be quantified onto a spreadsheet and put into a power point. When data is given importance above all else, time and resources are directed as such.

It has been years, YEARS, since I was in a building inservice that was about connecting with kids, communicating with parents, designing meaningful anti-bullying lessons, incorporating literature into math lessons or any topic other than data collection, data presentation, data comparison, state testing and teacher evaluations.

About five years ago I gave a presentation at a staff meeting dealing with recognizing childhood hunger in the classroom. Oregon leads the nation in childhood hunger, with about 30% of children living with food instability; they don't know when, if or what they will eat. I was teaching in a county with 25% of our children living with childhood hunger. I worked with our principal at the time and specialists to design and present this information so teachers and staff could recognize the symptoms and help our students. I have offered to give this presentation every year since then (with different principals and different schools), and I have consistently been told no, there is not enough time. Not enough time. For one-third of our children. There is not a place in my heart in which this is acceptable.

We are in a people business, not a numbers business. It is not that teachers do not value data and information systems. We absolutely do, so that we can know where each child is in their mastery of the concepts that we have taught. Record keeping, evaluation of scores, and calibration of lessons based on the data are important parts of being a teacher. Data is just not the entirety of what it means to be a teacher. Teaching and learning are about more than test scores. There are so many more verbs that describe good teachers other than data collection. However, this piece of our profession is now emphasized above all other traits and qualities. It is more important to value the child, work with the family and teach at a pace that makes sense for the learners than it is for teachers to know yet another way to compare data on spreadsheets. Current teachers are doing all of this and it is too much, and too unnecessary. The only educational reform that should be considered should be designed by experts; our experienced teachers, parents, community leaders and students.

Now, as I wind down here, I just want to share another story. I had a student who came new to my classroom. He was quite shy, hardly made eye contact, had a heavy speech issue, and wore ill-fitting clothes. He was new to our district as well, and his records had not yet arrived from his previous school so I didn't know anything about his background.

We were just beginning a writing unit when this child arrived. He put his head down on his desk and refused to even pick up his pencil. He was pretty withdrawn in general and wasn't making any social or educational progress. Writing was the hardest time for him. I had hardly seen his handwriting because he refused to participate. One day I saw he was playing with something in his pocket. I walked over and sat on the floor near him. After a few minutes, he asked me what I was doing, so I said that his desk looked like a creative spot so I wanted to work there, if it was alright with him. He didn't say anything, so I stayed there and corrected papers while the rest of the class was free writing for about ten minutes. I did this each day for about a week. He kept playing with something in his pocket. One day, he asked if I wanted to see it. It was a small Lego structure. We had a sweet little conversation about it and he told me how he built it. I told him that sounded like a neat story, and asked if I could write it down in his journal. Later that day, we were at the library and he was looking at a Lego book. I was so excited that I found an "in" with this student! After school, I procured a couple boxes of Legos and brought them to school the next day. At writing time, I asked him if he could build me something. He built a duck pond

with a school and children playing. I wrote down his whole story as he dictated it to me. As we progressed, he opened up to me and then to the other kids. Legos became a very cool thing in our classroom. It became something that the kids could play with during lunch and I put the new student in charge of the Legos. He started writing in his journal every day during writing time, he would build his story first and then write it down. He began writing all the time, he carried his journal with him so he could jot down his building ideas. Other kids started asking him about his stories, he became being known as a writer and kids from other classes would go up to him at recess and ask to hear his creative stories. It was incredible, so amazing to see the change in the child over the time of a few weeks. He was happy, smiling, the opposite of the child who had arrived in my room just a short time ago.

I eventually received his records, this child had been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder after witnessing extreme violence committed against a family member. Drugs, jail, domestic violence; this child had seen it all by the age of ten.

Our school helped this child; we worked together, we bought him Legos, we brought more Lego books into our library, said good morning, got him a warm coat and cared about him. Every single adult at that school knew who he was and the growth he made. Our school secretary brought in another box of Legos that her sons had outgrown. A male teachers' aid at the school dropped by and would show this student ways to build with Legos. The school resource officer arranged additional resources for his family. The school community came together and advocated for this little guy and it worked.

And not one spreadsheet was made. This was not included on one formal evaluation. No one got paid more. It wasn't reflected on a state test.

Helping a child, all children, should be the overriding goal of education. Sadly, that is not what is happening right now. Teachers like me and many others are leaving the profession. I'm not a unique teacher or a special teacher. Every school I have taught in has been filled with teachers taking extra efforts to advocate and support their students. We cannot endorse something we don't agree with by participating in it. Teachers shouldn't be leaving the profession because they care too much about children.

What can be done? Speak up. Find an audience that will listen. Have a conversation with a friend. Talk to the principal of your school. Volunteer. Write a letter to your local legislator. Post your opinion as your next status update. Speak up at a staff meeting. Email someone. Tweet it. Stand up, keep standing up.

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Ellie

Small business owner, former elementary school teacher, living outside Austin, Texas! Helping others, cooking, traveling, fam + friends, education, animals, health + fitness, boating, wine tasting, reading, LOVE my tribe! View all posts by Ellie

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# 384 thoughts on “The One Reason I Quit Teaching”

## 1. G Nankivell

November 6, 2015 at 9:04 pm

I too am a teacher. I have just listened to Malala’s story and she is so positive speaking up for feminism and educating girls. She had so much adversity in her life and she talks of fighting the good fight. She nearly lost her life and yet so goes forward with such hope about the possibilities. Don’t let politicians rob you wonderful teachers. Keep fighting the good fight. Don’t let adverse working conditions rob you of such a rewarding career. If you give up then the children miss out on wonderful opportunities to learn and grow. The politicians won’t change. Find ways to beat the system or work around it. Grab those wonderful life affirming moments in your work day and laugh with kids and show them WE ARE NOT QUITTERS! Yes teaching is hard, but so is life! Don’t give in, don’t give up. Grab it all and find the nuggets of gold in each day. And remember to BREATHE...

### REPLY

#### 1. Susan Tanabe

November 7, 2015 at 7:07 am

Spot on, G. Nankiwell! I highly appreciate your positivity ~ of course there are unbearable conditions in places and I do not begrudge anyone’s right to do what they feel best, however i praise those who can find solace and rest in each other, in meditation, in yoga, in prayer, in union activities, in their students, in the BIG picture. We have such power... we owe it to the future to do all we can. Bless you.

### REPLY

#### 2. cmdixon1013

November 22, 2015 at 2:28 pm

I recently resigned from teaching and just the other day told my husband that what makes me most sad about leaving is that I’m not as sad about leaving as I thought I would be. How sad is that?? This was beautifully written and honestly painful to read. You sound like a exceptional teacher (and person) and that school system should be sad to have lost you. You are exactly the type of teacher that schools need, that these kids need. It pains to think of where our world is going and that the small acts that teacher do daily aren’t even happening anymore because “there’s not time” or because the teachers that took that time aren’t there anymore! I’m beginning to ramble and most of what I’m saying you obviously already know and feel. Just know that my heart breaks for you and for education in general. Much love!

### REPLY

#### 1. mrsabbyallen

October 28, 2017 at 5:32 pm

I quit after 18 years and it is the most glorious decision I have ever made.

## 2. Harry winkler

November 9, 2015 at 8:52 pm

I taught high school health life management for 38 years. I wouldn't trade one moment of those years interacting with my students. What I could give a crap about is the constant rules, regulations, programs, ad infinitum that was being crammed down our throats by politicians that have no idea what teaching is all about. I sure wish I had written the above statement. I was our local "letter to the editor" writer of the year a few years ago. Most of my letters dealt with education and how to help those kids in need.

### REPLY

#### 3. **brownin329**

November 27, 2015 at 8:32 pm

I am currently a preschool special education itinerant teacher in New York. I have been trying to leave education for the past 7 years, but due to the economy, I have been having a terrible time finding anything outside of education. While I think it's great that some people want to fight (or rather, want YOU specifically to fight) the system, I say, leave it where it is. You've done enough. We teachers are like anyone else and we have our breaking points. I've met mine and the only cure is finding something else away from teaching. No amount of focus on "meditation, in yoga, in prayer, in union activities, in their students, in the BIG picture," is going to change anything. Others better than I have tried. This system is guided solely by money and money makes people, even in the caring professions, do funny things. Children will be sacrificed to get a better looking school on paper, but have the same crappy toys or textbooks or computers. Idealistic teachers will soon have their idealism beaten out of them. There is no support and no job security. I recently put my job on the line because I helped a student move from a head start to a special school. Why? This kid was a four-year-old autistic student with severe sensory issues, who couldn't cope with the stimulation of a class of 20 kids and four teachers. He'd strike out, throw things, tear up a classroom and pee on himself maybe 3-5 times a day, because he couldn't tell people how he felt. I'd go to the family workers, they said they tried talking to the parent about getting him a new placement, but she wouldn't budge. I contacted the DOE, found out there was a space at a better school, got mom to sign off on it and he was put in a new school in a matter of two months. You know what I found? The school hadn't budgeted to get him a new placement. Why? They make more money off of children with special needs and IEPs than kids without. The facility and the curriculum is not designed for children with special needs but they keep bringing them in...for THE MONEY. This is one of many stories I could share, but who cares? I may be fired soon. I'd rather quit. We'll see how my interview next week goes.

There are a lot of teachers who would tell you not to leave, to stay because the children need you. They'll be fine. I learned something and it's a hard lesson for a 'helper' to swallow, but I'm learning: You can't save everyone. Life is short. Save yourself.

I'm glad you got out. I hope you are happy and at peace. I hope to achieve the same peace soon.

### REPLY

#### 4. **Lisa**

January 1, 2016 at 4:35 pm

Thank you!

### REPLY

#### 5. **Lorie Smith Schaefer**

January 5, 2016 at 1:01 pm

Reblogged this on Lorie Schaefer and commented:

A powerful description about what good teachers do and what has gotten in the way of the doing it.

REPLY6. **Elle Knowles**January 5, 2016 at 1:25 pm

Very powerful story. My husband teaches HS band and will be retiring at the end of this year. He too sees the same problems you see with the education system in the US. Standing up for what is right and more importantly standing up for our children is what more educators need to do. One child at a time is better than no child ever. Thanks for this eye-opener. ~Elle

REPLY7. **Elle Knowles**January 5, 2016 at 1:31 pm

Reblogged this on Finding Myself Through Writing and commented:

This is a very powerful story I am reblogging of what is wrong with the education system in the US and why one teacher steps away. Education should always be about children and not about data and spreadsheets and evaluations...~Elle

REPLY8. **Lucie**January 7, 2016 at 12:32 am

Why do I feel that you, I and Janet (of Aunt Beulah) would have some great conversations over a cup of tea????? I am so worried about the state of education and the negative impact it's going to have on our children/our future. I, too, went into special education for the "people/the kids", but it became more of a job for "paper pushing" than anything else before I, too, left.....it's a shame. I'm proud of what I did for my kids and my parents, but I'm happy that I left when I did. It was literally KILLING me....nice piece, Lorie. 😊 Lucie

REPLY9. **kitchrn**January 7, 2016 at 4:12 pm

I would only have to change a few anecdotes to re-title this article, "The One Reason I Quit Nursing". Data-driven outcomes have edged out people-driven outcomes. Profit margins, mind-boggling regulations and politics define healthcare. Nursing, the last bastion of patient advocacy, is increasingly stretched thinner. Nurses are routinely asked to do the impossible, and frequently come through. For over 20 years as a registered nurse, I've heard that we will have to learn to do more with less. What I have learned is that less really is less, and just isn't enough. Big data, huge technology investments and management by spreadsheet have not improved patient care. Today, most patients are afraid to be admitted to the hospital without a friend or family member there 24/7 to advocate for them. That used to be the nurse's job. Now, the nurse on the understaffed unit is too busy entering data into the electronic medical record, which is essentially a billing platform with some incidental medical stuff tacked on. We measure outcomes to capture reimbursement, but our measurement tells us very little about real life patient outcomes. It certainly can't tell us about the hands that were not held, the words of comfort that were not whispered to the suffering. It also won't measure the poor patient outcomes because a nurse wasn't there to assess the subtle changes in a patient's condition and intervene long before he actually stopped breathing. Someone smart once said, "Not everything that can be counted counts. And not everything that counts can be counted". Maybe it was Einstein, maybe not, but brilliant and true, regardless.

By the way, my story would actually have to read, “The One Reason I Quit Nursing 10 Times.” I always come back. Often kicking and screaming. I suspect, in time, you’ll find your way back to the classroom, too. Teaching, like nursing, gets in your blood and stays in your heart. You can run, but you can’t hide. OK, you can hide for awhile, for the sake of your sanity. But eventually, that tell-tale heart will call you back, faintly at first, a dull, low sound, like a watch enveloped in cotton. Good luck.

### REPLY

#### 1. Deborah

November 6, 2016 at 10:51 am

I agree, I have been a nurse for 35 years and have seen this same dehumanization of the health care process which I believe is largely driven by litigation and politics. Having been “burned out” several times, I would try to do other things with my life, but I’m always drawn back to the bedside. Just know that we must take care of ourselves or there will be no one else to care for the needy.

### REPLY

#### 10. karlagaby04

January 12, 2016 at 3:53 am

Your story brought tears to my eyes. I resigned this past December after 7 years in education and my heart feels shattered. My students cried, held me in their arms, and begged me not to go. I was holding back the tears and the pain of no longer having them be that bright and colorful part of my life, but I felt that I would make a bigger statement for them and for ourselves as educators if I left.

Someone once compared teaching to an abusive relationship. One where the husband beats and beats the wife over and over again, but the wife refuses to leave because she continues to think of the children. I wholeheartedly agree with you when you wrote “We cannot endorse something we don’t agree with by participating in it.” Which is exactly why I left. I couldn’t take the district and the policies. The battle between what we are currently doing in the classroom vs. what we could be doing and expected to be doing according to legislators who have never set foot in the classroom is beyond me. I was told I was a highly effective teacher in my evaluation but left every day feeling like a failure because of the demands brought upon by the data. Demands that I never had enough time to prepare for unless I volunteered my personal time, which was always. I found myself working 14 hours a day until I said, enough is enough.

Still broken hearted.

### REPLY

#### 1. Susan Tanabe

January 12, 2016 at 8:12 pm

WARNING; this reply may be offensive and I honestly mean for it to be a positive thing. Education does not have to be like this! I taught over 30 years, still teaching in Community College. Worked with hundreds of colleagues, dozens of administrators, and NEVER would I have let any of them, no matter how twisted, make me quit. I taught three decades because I knew I was making a difference for the kids. I taught three decades because I would want great teachers for our three children and they completely understood the time and dedication. I taught three decades because my parents (until they passed), siblings, and husband all understand, and many of them are educators as well. Priorities! Make time for yourself, treat yourself well, be strong, speak up, be reasonable, communicate, WORK FOR CHANGE..... quitting helps no one.

REPLY1. **patpetrino**February 22, 2016 at 6:54 am

I'm not a quitter, but with the way data-collection and documentation sucks the life out of teachers, and steals away the joy of teaching, the human compassion and understanding have taken a back seat to assessments (even in kindergarten!) I dream of the day I can retire. You are so right! Education does not have to be this way, but it is! The pendulum will surely swing, eventually, but in the meantime, children and their teachers are being hurt by the current focus of education.

11. **Kathie**January 14, 2016 at 6:14 am

I've taught for 36 and plan to get out in a year. The last few years are way too bad with the policies of people who know nothing about education. I won't allow my daughter to be an educator. A lot of my friends feel the same way. Maybe if there becomes a bigger shortage of teachers, the legislators will quit trying to kill us off. At least in Utah!

REPLY12. **eliza**February 17, 2016 at 6:22 am

My son loved school until they introduced the new "core" classes. It is so disheartening to watch a child go from brilliant to thinking they are stupid. Anyone who has looked at a math test with the new curriculum would feel stupid! I am a teacher, and I teach vocational classes, however I feel for those who have to meet the standardized tests. Our government carries too much weight in making poor decisions for the sake of data.

REPLY1. **Deborah**November 6, 2016 at 10:56 am

So pull your son out of the abusive public school and make learning fun again!! This will affect his self image for years! Check out Classical Conversations and take back the education of your children. Many say, "I don't have the time or I may not be good enough," but we are charged by God to bring up our children in the way they should go and that responsibility cannot be delegated to others without dire consequences. Find something to do at home — tutor, sew, or teach at night. I did this for my youngest son and have not the first moment of regret.

REPLY13. **honeyskids**April 21, 2016 at 1:02 am

I would be lying if I said I like your article, and not because it wasn't well written; it was perfect. You are talking about a rewarding career that "beats" teachers up! I, too, am a teacher, and love my job most days. The kids are great and not the problem. It's the constant political changes and ever changing laws that dictate how we teach in the classroom by people who have never taught and do not have a clue about what we do. The endless testing stresses our children, and in turn, stresses the teachers because they do not enjoy watching their students agonize over these tests. I agree with you; teaching is more than tests, and data, and spread sheets. No wonder, our country is starting to face a teacher shortage. The pressure is often overwhelming. A few years ago, we lost an amazing math teacher that loved our kids. He also coached girls and boys basketball, and the kids loved him. With all the changes in education, he decided to leave because he stated, "If you have a family to support,

teaching is not the right profession.” It wasn’t the long hours, and it wasn’t the low salaries. It was because people no longer had job security. Now, he believed in accountability for teachers, but he did not think his job should be on the line because a student/students refused to do their work on a daily basis, and the just sit in class day after day. And I agree. Hopefully, people will eventually see how harmful this is to all involved the educational arena. Thanks for sharing your story.

### REPLY

#### 14. **Lori Lovetere**

April 23, 2016 at 5:45 pm

Exactly how I feel. I’m almost ready to leave NOT because of the kids are even the parents. Tired of not being listened to by those who’ve never taught and tired of feeling like an accomplice to a crime. Great blog.

### REPLY

#### 15. **RP**

April 24, 2016 at 1:51 am

I stumbled upon your story today at an interesting time in my life. The politics of teaching are getting to me. I feel like administrators and districts are putting kids second, teachers third, and data first. I improve scores in every position, but administrators still want more. I have even witnessed a district bullying veteran teachers out of positions so they can replace them with college graduates who have no experience or understanding of their rights. I feel sorry for education. I want to stay, but I don’t know if I can handle what this is turning into. Parents are unhappy and speaking out – but it doesn’t seem to matter.

Our focus should be about student success and career preparation. It shouldn’t be focused on state scores (especially when they don’t test what students are actually doing). It should be about teaching the whole child, not just part of the child. What happened to teaching character? What happened to teaching responsibility and accountability? What happened to the teachers who put hours into their curriculum and lessons to keep students engaged and learning? What happened to putting students first?

Thank you. Thank you for this article that doesn’t make me feel so alone or guilty.

### REPLY

#### 1. **CDD**

July 10, 2016 at 12:10 am

I have been in the education “business” (if you will) for just a bit less than 30 years. Many of my friends have retired in the past 4-5 years (when the word “business” really began to be what education “used” to be about). I even have one friend who was (as it says above) “bullied” out of her position by younger and less experienced administrators with MUCH LESS knowledge and experience than her – and even though she was an excellent teacher, with much emphasis on teaching children to feel good about themselves, their success and how they were able to overcome their difficulties, she was “let go” because of her not “doing” the type of teaching they wanted to see... the rubrics, the scales, the “way” someone (most likely not teaching in a classroom for an extended length of time) determined the only correct way to teach. Now, I too am encountering the same types of things. I feel more of a “disrespected” manner by some (not all) of my colleagues, by the administrators who are (for the most part) all about 8-10 years younger than me, and most of all the “feeling” that I am not appreciated for the knowledge I have gained as a professional in my field. So, I will be looking forward to retiring (soon) if I too am not “forced” to be pushed out first. Despite my dedication and loyalty to this profession, my love for teaching children reading, writing, math, social studies, science, responsibility, accountability,

good self-concept, and many other things too numerous to continue – I am being told I am not “good” enough in some areas and even though I continue to strive for whatever I am needing improvement in – well, it never seems to be enough and there is always another area for me to “work on”. It is quite a disappointment for me (after all these years) to have to “end” my teaching career on this note – but as time goes on, I will heal – and at the same time have hope for those who are entering this profession- with the tremendous obstacles they may have to face.

### REPLY

#### 2. **Karen**

November 5, 2016 at 3:23 pm

I identified with your comments! I too just took (forced to) take early retirement as an administrator and always fought the good fight that when to decide to do anything – something !!! ...if it was in the best interest of the students never hesitate to make the call!!! Maybe that was my demise. Now I serve as an educational consultant going into school to provide PD to teachers who are forced to be there while all their heads are thinking about is when benchmarks are due, when this and that is due, etc. I must present to them but I chose to provide a PD that whatever the topic is – I make it meaningful and relevant to their needs so that it will benefit their students. I try in my presentations to remind them WHY they chose to be a teacher. Remind them that if they are enjoying what they do ...the students WILL benefit and be motivated. I too remind and inspire them that it IS all about the students! If students are engaged and excited about what they are learning – well they WILL learn!!! Unfortunately, our new regime of Administrators do not have the same way of thinking. Isn't that a shame!

### REPLY

#### 16. **Brock**

August 31, 2016 at 2:56 pm

Excellent read and an understandably difficult decision: leave teaching. However, blaming politicians or the inert educational system for the lack of focus on students is misdirected. You do not mention teachers unions – unions that basically own both parties in every national election and hamstring a schools ability to react dynamically to educational opportunities or challenges. Your editorial is heartfelt but misses the chance to make a more worthwhile connection to actual progress, instead simply complaining anecdotally about a problem as if there were no solution... Or perhaps you find that solution politically or personally unpalatable?

### REPLY

17. Pingback: My Career 2.0 – elonaschreiner

18. Pingback: The One Reason I Quit Teaching | In My Mind's Eye

#### 19. **Janet Failor**

November 3, 2016 at 11:41 am

In her first year of college my daughter decided to become a teacher. A decision I whole heartedly applauded. We are a family of teachers- my father, my grandmother, several aunts, and uncles, and cousins, her own father was a teacher at one point. So she got the training and the diploma. She got hours and hours of classroom experience starting as a Freshman in college. She was part of a teaching program at a small private college that, at graduation, 98% of the graduates had a job already. They were sought after. They were the first pick for a lot of school districts. And..... after 2 years of teaching ..... has taken a job outside of teaching . It is NOT what she was expecting. It is NOT what she was taught to teach or how to teach it. It is forms. And policies. And evaluations. And continuing education in service that had nothing to do with the kids . She left because she felt she wasn't teaching..... she was monitoring. And that is NOT what she went

to school for. She wanted to teach. To see a child learn. To get it. To watch them grow and bloom and become their own person.

My daughter is a wonderful teacher. It is what she was meant to be. One day, I dearly hope that she is allowed to be just that. A teacher. Nothing more.

### REPLY

#### 1. **Jennifer Cataldo**

November 3, 2016 at 6:23 pm

I feel so sad for your daughter. I hope that she is able to find her calling through some other avenue.

### REPLY

#### 20. **25 and Rambling**

November 4, 2016 at 12:53 am

Reblogged this on 25 and Rambling and commented:

This post is great! I am a teacher and part of it sums up some things I think especially the “we are in a people business not a numbers business” Teachers as well as others should read this!

### REPLY

#### 21. **Janet Mangum**

November 5, 2016 at 6:36 am

I so agree with this post. I have been teaching for 17 years. I have not yet left teaching completely. I have 4 years left before I can take an early retirement, so I decided to continue to teach part-time so that I can receive that retirement. My turning point that made me question if I wanted to remain in this profession was a teacher development training taught by people from our school district. It was a training for the writing portion of our state testing. I sat there and listened to the presenter unabashedly tell us how to teach to the test. How to only teach what was going to be on the year-end testing, and how to teach it in the exact way it would be tested so that the students could be successful. No talk of creativity or enjoyment in writing, or in teaching for that matter. Just teaching to a TEST. It was pathetic. I left that meeting so disheartened. This was not what I had signed up for when I decided to be a teacher. I wanted to make a difference in children’s lives, not teach only to make sure they did well on a test. I remember when the teacher who only taught what was going to be on the test was looked down upon and whispered about in the faculty room. Now, the district was teaching us how to be that teacher, and telling us we had to be that. So I didn’t quit, but now I’ve moved from my 4th grade classroom into a part-time elementary technology position. My grading is pass/fail and there are no year-end tests for my curriculum. I’m enjoying teaching without all the BS. When my 4 years are up, I’ll probably take that early retirement though. I’m tired.

### REPLY

#### 1. **jennwhitneycataldo**

November 6, 2016 at 2:56 pm

Wow. I feel like I wrote your post. The exact same thing happened to me except the workshop was about teaching to the reading portion of the standardized test. The presenters actually told us we could teach ALL our reading curriculum through the use of the past tests! I thought I was in the twilight zone.

I too left the classroom after over 20 years and am now a math interventionist. This way I am still helping children, trying to improve their math confidence and skills, without all the nonsense.

The status of teaching is so devastating to me. I hope it is only a matter of time before the powers that be come to their senses.

REPLY22. **Vicky Reams**November 7, 2016 at 3:10 pm

The same thing has happened with our “human resources” agencies. Everything is data and numbers and many people and much time spent monitoring. Not enough caseworkers, but many to watch, analyze the data, etc. I worked in Medicaid for the disabled and elderly. We were told that when people left they were not going to be replaced because computers could do our jobs. This turned out to be a mess. Very high caseloads and everything about how many cases completed a day and work completed like an assembly line. Not enough time to really listen to people. The people making decisions about the work not understanding the human factor. I have retired also because my health went downhill and I had “burnout”. I was trying my best to help as many as I could, while under a lot of pressure to perform. My heart went out to so many in real need that could not be helped because of the politics of the business. In this rich country, we should not have people with cancer and other severe illnesses not able to get healthcare when needed. I know there is fraud, but I would rather some people maybe receive it that shouldn’t and be able to get help to those that need it too. Instead, there is a general consensus to do away with it all. Let’s throw the baby out with the bath water seems to be the theme. I would have starved to death when my father abandoned my mother, who was ill, with 6 children, if it wasn’t for the food stamp program. I know it is unpopular, but we need these programs. The food stamp program also helps the farmers, grocery businesses, creates jobs, and helps the economy. Many elderly really need them and also many children with food insecurity. I could say so much more.

REPLY23. **Amy**November 8, 2016 at 2:54 pm

This beautifully sums up one of the reasons we homeschool, from quite an unexpected perspective. I realize this teacher was not advocating homeschool, but from my point of view as a parent, I can wholeheartedly agree. We did not want our children herded through the system or taught to the test with no regard for actual learning. We wanted our children to have a love of learning and the ability to learn and think for themselves, not be another statistic for the state testing. I have a great respect for the teachers that are called to this job, however I have no respect at all for the system that dictates them. Gone are the days (at least for now) when teachers could love their job of opening the eyes of their students to the world of learning. I am sad for students AND for teachers that have no other option but to endure this system. I applaud those who have left, whether or not they have done any more for education. Instead of “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”, I say if it is broken beyond repair, throw it away and start over. Many teachers will disagree with that and I mean no offense, but how many children have been harmed, ignored, and otherwise sacrificed by this system of “education” while the administration processes all the data? Sure some students survive, thrive even, in spite of it all. What of those who don’t? The future of our country is in the hands of a generation whose overall education will be sub par at best. Not because the teachers aren’t doing their job, because they are. Their job is no longer to provide the best education regardless of neighborhood or social status, it is to make the school look good on paper so as not to lose funding. What the children actually learned or accomplished has no bearing on the results of the test that “grades” the school. Whether or not the children ate over the weekend, or had a bed to sleep in, or had to stay inside because their neighborhood is unsafe, or if the parents could afford a tutor or even cared is not considered on the results. Rich and poor, elite and lower class, private and public all lumped together as equal and compared side by side... how is that standardized? I remember, as a top twenty student, constantly competing academically with a school that serviced a wealthy community. Our public school had some very smart students that were the minority. How could we compete/compare? We could not

afford tutors or special classes, nor could we have our entire school at the same level. I do not support common core or communism but until all things are equal, no thing will be equal. Too many variables influence each child at each school in each system of each state to have any standardization. Too many variables influence each teacher at each school in each system to have consistency throughout a child's school career. If one teacher doesn't finish during a school year, the student(s) suffers from the gap and the next teacher may or may not be able to catch them up. So sorry to rant, the heartbreak of this teacher who obviously has a love for children has struck a chord with me today. If I was unable to homeschool my children, I would want this kind of teacher for them... every single year, not just when the stars aligned. The system is truly broken...continuing to try to fix it is only wasting precious time. The children are the ones who will ultimately pay the price. Our country will suffer when these children that have been told what to know to pass a test grow up and can not learn for themselves...or perhaps we are already experiencing this?

### REPLY

#### 24. **Laurie Rachell**

December 30, 2016 at 4:19 pm

Such a beautifully written story. Heartfelt words & beautiful moments that made such positive differences in children's lives, as well as your own. Frustrations at changes & obviously unnecessary things that are required to be done at work, because of political involvement, are certainly frustrating. Frustrations go hand in hand with any job. Places of employment staff to bare minimal levels to meet certain quotas. Hospitals staff floors based on numbers of patients, not by acuity of illness, just to crunch numbers... as if nurses make outrageous salaries. CEO's make millions & provide no direct patient care.

Top executives make millions of dollars, but demand that no overtime be paid to employees of the same business that sometimes make as low as minimum wage. There are strict rules of lunch breaks, late clock-ins, overtime, sick time & back-breaking manual jobs, "lives on the line" type of jobs and the list goes on. Now, I would like to say that I commend the teachers that have the courage, the competence & the caring that it takes to teach children & people of any age. It sounds as if you were meant to teach. You sound like you are wonderfully skilled, clever and caring, that it is obvious your absence is one more strike against these children in the school systems. The obstacles in any career are frustrating, aggravating and even infuriating, but should they be allowed to have enough power over you, to leave a job that you loved and made such a positive impact in? It's wonderful that you had the ability to make a career choice also, not everyone has that luxury, and I'm sure you know how fortunate you are. I guess I am being devil's advocate, as frustrations in any job or career can make one want to quit, every day that they are working. I just can't say that the reasons that you give, the waste of time spreadsheets, nonsense paperwork, and lack of quality time in important topics to be addressed, justify quitting a career, that seemed more like a calling of some sorts to you. This seems sad to me.

I am glad you are getting your point across in this story and I hope you help fight the political involvement where it is not needed in education.

Thank-you.

### REPLY

#### 25. Pingback: The One Reason I Quit Teaching | Imlahiri

#### 26. **Jill**

March 9, 2017 at 10:01 am

Thank you. You have explained the core of the problem our profession faces ( and our children) very well. I'm an Australian Teacher. We too are drowning in data collection and administrative busy work.

REPLY

27. Pingback: The One Reason I Quit Teaching | Have diabetes, will travel

28. **Pat Graham**

November 3, 2017 at 12:53 am

I did not teach school ~I taught children.

After raising my children I returned as a teacher substitute . I am now retired. In Saskatchewan, the focus on data is foremost, often requiring teachers to do major paperwork which means less time for meaningful lesson plans. Good teachers KNOW exactly where every student is on any subject. Curriculum is province-wide and most often comparable to other provinces. Over the decades I frequented schools 1968-2010 one of the biggest changes has been in the amount of knowledge we are cramming into the students. What was Gr4 material is now Gr2 etc. Students are not given enough time to be children and to be friends. Recesses have been shortened or eliminated because students don't know how to play together. One school district hired university students to be playground ambassadors to go from school to school teaching children how to play and have fun. Bring back common sense.

REPLY

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