



Trusting in Our Kids and Their Teachers

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No matter what some may say, all children can learn at exceedingly high levels. No matter their backgrounds, home lives, or struggles, they can succeed. Every one of our students can develop academic self-confidence and emotional well-being, all the while gaining a deep understanding of their place and purpose in our world. This unflinching, no-doubt-about-it positivism about what is possible in our schools is not presented as an inspiring vision or mission. It is offered up as fact. It is presented as truth, for it is rooted in sound research, broad observations, wide experience, and deep certainty.

As educators, we know that all children can learn because it has been done countless times and without fail. Across our classrooms far and wide, great teachers have skillfully cut through the binds of poverty, bureaucracy, and accountability to accomplish unimaginable outcomes that impact children from all walks of life. Across the landscape of a thousand schools in a thousand cities and towns, great teachers are helping children master reading, writing, math, history, science, and many other subjects each day, even in classrooms where nearly all students arrive from homes with hardship and trauma.

A master teacher who stares down the critics and brings students to incredible heights is the kind of thing they make movies about. The funny thing is this: It is not all that unusual. There are teachers in every school who make this happen each day, without fanfare. This is why we must honor their work and sacrifice at all costs. In fact, this is a call to re-instate our full faith and confidence in our teachers and not our policymakers.

In the end, we must study and learn from our best teachers and follow their leads. Nothing fancy. Nothing miraculous. With all due respect to the broad fields of educational and cognitive research, let us all remember that the research itself did not offer up the strategies that work in our classroom. Our teachers did that. The research around instructional best practices simply affirms and synthesizes for us the techniques that our best teachers use. Great teaching comes first, and the research follows. Let us not forget that every best practice began as a new practice.

There is no doubt that if we filled a room full of master teachers via some kind of escape room exercise, they would solve the challenges we face in education. Neither our policymakers nor our researchers can do that. In that spirit, it is time again that we find our purpose as educators and regain our souls. Along that journey, let us re-establish our trust and belief in our teachers, reject the current attacks on our schools, re-install the strategies that work best for our children, re-inspire our faith, and re-wonder again.