The Courage to Teach & Lead

Reflective Practice to Improve Schools

Mary Kaye Siebert, Ph.D., USD 320, Wamego Schools
November, 2012
The Courage to Teach

Parker J. PALMER

THE COURAGE TO TEACH

EXPLORING the INNER LANDSCAPE of a TEACHER’S LIFE

Mary Kaye Siebert, Ph.D., USD 320, Wamego
Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique or skills but is rooted in the identity and integrity of the teacher.

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What calls us to this work of teaching and the teaching life?
Pause: Slow down, create space for ideas to emerge

Openness: Open heart and mind

Inquiry: Questioning

Thinking: Examining goals, beliefs, practices

Learning: New insights

Action: The essence of reflective practice

Enhanced student learning

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A Moment in Teaching

Reflect/Journal on a moment in your teaching when things went so well, you knew you were born to teach.

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Reflective Inquiry in Action

Reflect/Journal on a moment in your teaching when things went so well, you knew you were born to teach.

- In A-B-C triads, take turns sharing these stories. Help each other name the gifts of the teacher that helped make this good moment possible, not techniques, but the qualities of the person.

- Write down your gifts that are revealed by your partners.

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Teachers, how often do you get time to reflect and share these more heart-centered thoughts with colleagues?

Administrators, where do you provide time for this type of reflection and sharing in our school district’s professional development?
"We teach who we are"

-Parker Palmer

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Quality teachers are the single most important factor in determining student performance (Marzano, 2003)

Teacher Burnout and Attrition

- Baby boomers retiring, birthrates and immigration increasing. (Johnson, 2006)
- 40-50% of new teachers leave the profession in the first five years
- Two-thirds of these teachers leave due to job dissatisfaction (Ingersoll, 2003, 2007)
- Burn out can result in isolation and caring less about students and other responsibilities associated with teaching (Patterson, Collins, & Abbott, 2004)
How do we retain and sustain good teachers?

- Improve working conditions
- Collaboration with fellow teachers
- Time to reflect on who we are as teachers, our practice and student learning leads to RENEWAL

(Brock & Brady, 200; Johnson, 2006, Ingersoll, 2007)
Alignment between Vocational Purpose & Practice

“We teach WHO we are”

(Palmer, 2007)
When teachers struggle to maintain focus on a deep purpose, helplessness and hopelessness prevails.

Professional engagement occurs when individuals are committed and passionate about their work…the driving force behind innovation, creativity and change

A purpose based on deep values, creates motivation, and desire to align the “who” with the “what”.

(Vandenberghe & Huberman, 1999; IEE, 2007; George, 2007)
“We teach who we are”
(Palmer, 2007, p. 1)

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Effective Professional Development

- Helps teachers reach high standards and improve student learning.
- Allows for full immersion in studying, doing, and reflecting.
- Provides opportunities for research and inquiry about what they do and how it impacts student learning.
- Gives time to examine our purpose and practice, in a collaborative setting, enhancing the psychic rewards of coming to work each day.
RENEWAL as Professional Development

Helps teachers...

- Grow and contribute to the growth of others...providing energy to work efficiently and avoid problems that could potentially arise.
- Connect the WHO that teaches with the role of the teacher.
- Renew- Gain a sense of peace and purpose in their work, enhancing their desire and ability to create positive learning environments for children.

Brock & Grady, 2000; Steffy et al., 2000; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006

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Deep thinking

Addresses the concept of *identity* in which reflective practice focuses on one’s mission, identity, and values.

Develop a deeper level of self-awareness about the nature and impact of their performance.

(Dewey, 1910; Osterman and Kottkamp, 1993; York-Barr et al., 2006)

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If vocational vitality is an essential component of good teaching—and by extension, student learning and effective schools—then it deserves commensurate attention in the lives and work of teachers.
One School’s Journey

Year One
7 teachers

Year Two
12 teachers

Year Three
18 teachers

* Use of 3rd Things

* Parameters for Circles of Trust gatherings (TOUCHSTONES)

* By Invitation!

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The Courage to Teach, written by Parker Palmer, builds on a simple premise: good teaching cannot be reduced to technique or skills but is rooted in the identity and integrity of the teacher.

“The question we most commonly ask is the ‘what’ question – what subjects shall we teach? When the conversation goes a bit deeper, we ask the ‘how’ question – what methods and techniques are required to teach well.

Occasionally, when it goes deeper still, we ask the ‘why’ question – for what purpose and to what ends do we teach?

But seldom, if ever do we ask the ‘who’ question – who is the self that teaches? How does the quality of my selfhood form, or deform, the way I relate to my students, my subject, my colleagues, and my world?” ~ Parker Palmer

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One School’s Journey

The voice of the teachers

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The Voice of the Teacher

How has Courage to Teach impacted you?
Impact of Process on Teachers:

Creating a Collective Wisdom

- Listening
- Professional Dialogue
- Supportive Relationships*
- Courage to Take Risks
- Courage to Lead Others
The Voice of the Teacher

Why is this kind of professional development important to teachers?
Impact of Process on Teachers:

Creating a Collective Wisdom

- Listening
- Professional Dialogue
- Supportive Relationships*
- Courage to Take Risks
- Courage to Lead Others

Shift in Perspective

- Deeper Understanding of Self
- Empowered
- The Value of Reflection*
- Deeper Understanding of Colleagues

Creating a Collective Wisdom

- Listening
- Professional Dialogue
- Supportive Relationships*
- Courage to Take Risks
- Courage to Lead Others
The Voice of the Teacher

How has Courage to Teach impacted you?
1. Double confidentiality

2. Listen with the intent to understand. SILENCE is okay!

3. During the group time, we will refrain from trying to “fix” each other – or solve each other’s problems...but to “hear each other into speech”.

4. We will ask honest, open questions instead of giving advice or analysis.
“Courage to Teach has renewed my focus...helping me to remember why I became a teacher in the first place.

It reaffirms my belief in teaching, my students, in education in general.”
Creating a Collective Wisdom

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Shift in Perspective

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Vocational Purpose

- Kids Before Content
- Build Classroom and School Community
- General Impact on Sense of Purpose

Creating a Collective Wisdom

- Listening
- Professional Dialogue
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- Courage to Take Risks
- Courage to Lead Others

Impact of Process on Teachers:
Impact on Students (Intrator & Scribner)

I feel that in mirroring the beliefs I hold for connectedness; the hope is that no student (not one!) will feel on the outside looking in. I make sure in this data-driven year of test scores, that I don't lose heart and that my children feel cared for or connected to at the end of each day.

(Elementary school teacher, 23-years’ experience)

I have a broader and deeper perspective which I think/hope has strengthened my ability to reach and work with kids who are already “outside” or in danger of leaving the system of education because they don’t feel listened to.

(Elementary school teacher, 21-years’ experience)

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I am able to see through a sharper lens—to make choices as action rather than reaction. I feel calm and focused as a teacher. I feel more “tuned-in” to my students and their needs, so I am better able to accommodate them and encourage their growth. (High school teacher, 7-years’ experience)
“We as teachers can only give what we have. If we have more to give because of Courage to Teach, (and we do), more is accomplished in the classroom.”

What difference does this courage work have on students?
Teachers benefit from practices of reflective inquiry under the following conditions:

- **Time** (Bolin & Falk, 1987)
- **Space away from the school and school day** for the deeply personal form of reflective practice (York-Barr et al., 2006)
- **A commitment to the norms builds trust** (Tschannen-Moran, 2004)
- **Book study:**
  - Inner teacher: Paradoxes in education & Communities of teaching and learning. (Palmer, 2007)
- **Skilled facilitation:** listen, care, redirect, remain neutral (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004)
- **Support from administration.** (Chappuis, Chappuis, Stiggens, 2009)
Past Circle of Trust Participants Share

- “The most deeply meaningful educational experience I’ve ever had. Full of substance, affirmation, and light, it is life-altering.”

- “It has renewed my joy in teaching. I still see the school issues, but I can separate those aspects more easily now from my classroom experiences. I feel renewed and excited about teaching itself.”

- “Rich, abundant, thought- and heart-provoking.”

- “I loved the balance between self, work & sharing with others.”

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“Heart-centered, soul-searching, uplifting, gentle yet demanding, strengthening, and full of gifts to take home and share with others.”

“Empowering & encouraging.”

“If public education is going to be a true road to a meaningful life and healthy community membership, we must nurture educators so they do not burn out and despair beneath overwhelming demands, but maintain an inner gyroscope and persevere.

“Fantastic! Restorative, surprisingly what I needed in ways I couldn’t expect.”

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Fire…

- Poem
- Bookmark
What makes a fire burn is space between the logs, a breathing space.

Too much of a good thing, too many logs packed in too tight can douse the flames almost as surely as a pail of water would.

So building fires requires attention to the spaces in between, as much as to the wood.

When we are able to build open spaces in the same way we have learned to pile on the logs, then we can come to see how it is fuel, and absence of the fuel together, that make fire possible.

We only need to lay a log lightly from time to time.

A fire grows simply because the space is there, with openings in which the flame that knows just how it wants to burn can find its way.
How might you create “space” for the “fire” to grow?
Within yourself?
Your students?
Your teachers?
http://www.couragerenewal.org/
Coming Soon....

Courage To Teach Retreat

July 12-14, 2013
Rock Springs 4-H Center

For more information contact Mary Kaye Siebert
siebertm@usd320.com
OR
The Center for Courage & Renewal Website
http://www.couragerenewal.org/

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Additional Books for Your Reflective Practice

- Intrator, Sam M. (2002). *Stories of the courage to teach: Honoring the teacher’s heart*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
If this topic resonates with what you believe to be essential to teaching and learning, take a moment to let KSDE know.
Thank you for the honor of being with you today.

~Mary Kaye

Center for Courage & Renewal Facilitator