

IF YOU WANT TO SURVIVE, FIND YOUR TEACHER TRIBE



Educator Barnes – 7/17/18

When you watch movies about high school, everyone falls into a group or has a label. Me, I was the blerd (black nerd) and the loner. I had a few friends and that was by choice, and most often I preferred to keep to myself and be alone. I maintained this behavior throughout college and in my professional life, but being a teacher can be hard, exhausting, and a downright struggle. Even me, this introvert who loves Alexander Pope's poem "[Ode to Solitude](#)," knows that everyone needs a tribe, a group of people who are there for you through thick and thin. If you aren't part of a teacher tribe yet, you need to join one. Here are a few reasons, teachers need a tribe.

Everyone needs to vent.

Sometimes school life sucks. Your principal is on your back. That parent has called three times in one week and also emailed and carbon copied the principal, school board, and superintendent. Students are showing out in class. The skills you have taught all week, no one has retained. Parents and spouses can be good sounding boards, but unless they are teachers, some of your struggles, they just won't understand. You need trusted teachers who you can pour out your soul to without having to explain background knowledge of how school and so you don't have to keep going back in your story to say the full name of all the fancy education acronyms we use.

Iron sharpens iron.

If you are a teacher, you know the phrase, "beg, borrow, and steal." When you have a group of trusted teacher friends, you can be vulnerable. During my career, I struggled with teaching grammar in a way where students would retain it. I understood grammar, but I couldn't seem to transfer the knowledge into my students' brains. My teacher tribe shared ideas they had implemented to teach grammar and it helped my students and I helped my teacher friends with teaching reading comprehension. Together we were all becoming stronger educators.

Encouragement goes a long way.

We all could use a cheerleader. You need to surround yourself with other teachers who will support and encourage you. We all learn really quickly which teacher is Ms. Debbie Downer. You don't need Ms. Downer in your life. You need a teacher tribe to support you when you want to try a new lesson, pursue a graduate degree or even transition into administration. Words and actions of support will help you accomplish your goals and block out the negativity.

Teacher tribes aren't bound to your school. These can be teachers from your current or previous schools, teachers in other states, or even in other countries. I love my teacher tribe; it is small AND mighty. The most important part of a teacher tribe is the people in your tribe can be trusted and they believe in you, they see all of your potential, and know your greatness.

Who is in your teacher tribe? Tell us why this person is made the cut to be in your tribe.