



Teachers Can't Serve Students Well Alone

By Educator Barnes – October 5, 2020

Annually, on October 5, World Teachers' Day is celebrated. The theme this year is Teachers: Leading in crisis: reimagining the future. In a [joint statement](#) from UNESCO, International Labour Organization, UNICEF, and Education International, the importance and hard work of educators during the coronavirus pandemic were noted.

In this crisis, teachers have shown, as they have done so often, great leadership and innovation in ensuring that #LearningNeverStops, that no learner is left behind. Around the world, they

have worked individually and collectively to find solutions and create new learning environments for their students to allow education to continue. Their role advising on school reopening plans and supporting students with the return to school is just as important.

The statement goes on to highlight inequities that were present before the world was struck with the pandemic. "Even before COVID-19, more than half of all ten-year-olds in low- to middle-income countries could not understand a simple written story." Despite teachers' best efforts, there will still be learning gaps to close which is compounded by the fact that many of these gaps existed before the pandemic, were widened when school buildings closed, and holding steady due to the lack of resources to maintain learning in the COVID-19 world.

At first, when the pandemic began, teachers were heroes. Now, some people see teachers as lazy because some have concerns about teaching in-person. These concerns are heightened by educators of color who serve mostly students of color because people of color have had poorer outcomes when they test positive for the coronavirus. The mental strain of trying to teach while fearing for physical safety is the daily battle for educators. Unfortunately, some educators have died from coronavirus while trying to educate children.

World Teachers' Day began in 1994. It is celebrated on October 5 because, on that day in 1966, recommendations concerning the status of teachers were adopted by UNESCO and the International Labour Organization. The focus of these recommendations was to provide guidance about the teaching profession worldwide. The recommendations note "it is the fundamental right of every child to be provided with the fullest possible educational opportunities."

A few guiding principles that were noted to achieve that goal were:

- *It should be recognized that advance in education depends largely on the qualifications and ability of the teaching staff in general and on the human, pedagogical and technical qualities of the individual teachers.*
- *Teaching should be regarded as a profession: it is a form of public service which requires of teachers expert knowledge and specialized skills, acquired and maintained through rigorous and continuing study; it calls also for a sense of personal and corporate responsibility for the education and welfare of the pupils in their charge.*
- *Working conditions for teachers should be such as will best promote effective learning and enable teachers to concentrate on their professional tasks.*

Based on concerns shared by educators, too many do not feel prepared or believe they have been provided with an adequate or safe environment to teach students. Yesterday, on "[Open Lines](#)," a teacher shared concerns anonymously about the amount of personal protective equipment the teacher was provided by Pike Township.

Some teachers are being asked to teach students remotely at the same time they are teaching students in-person. Other teachers are teaching part of the day remotely and part in-person. Some teachers are teaching some days a week in-person and other days remotely. Then, there are the students who have to switch from in-person to remote and back to in-person due to being quarantined. Then, there are teachers who are teaching 100% in-person or 100% online. None of these scenarios have been upheld as the best scenario. In all scenarios, teachers are asking for support. They are asking for the grace and gratitude that slipped away when the current school year began.

World Teachers' Day should be a moment for reflection on what each person in the community can do to support teachers so they can teach children well. Teachers need help! If teachers aren't helped, the students get hurt.