



## The Teacher Who Couldn't Read Isn't a Story to Celebrate

By Educator Barnes – November 30, 2020

Recently an [article](#) from 2018 made its rounds around social media again. The article focused on John Corcoran who shares his story of how he didn't learn to read until he was an adult. No one should leave school without being able to read. It makes life difficult for those children when they become adults.

The article centers around how Corcoran deceived others and even had stolen property and cheated to get by in life. The biggest crime he committed was taking a job as an educator. Why would a person who was failed by the education system want to go and work for that same system when he couldn't read? The answer is simple. He knew he could get away with it.

This story is extreme, but it is not unique. Teacher mediocrity is alive and well in classrooms across the United States. Teachers are supposed to be professionals. A professional should be a person who is an expert in his or her field, not a person who is only getting by or hiding under the radar.

In any profession, a newbie has to learn the ropes and the organization should provide supports to ensure this is the case. At some point, when supports are put in place and results are not yielded, the organization has to decide whether to keep investing in the individual or cut its losses. This concept seems to make sense until the profession of education enters the picture. Instead of addressing the problem of mediocre teachers head-on, the outcry is that teachers are being bashed, and it's not fair.

Why is it fair to students to have teachers who aren't effective? Why is this acceptable? Not yielding results in other fields has consequences, but in education, you can thrive and progress with no worries at all. This is why a teacher who can't read was able to 'teach' students. As Corcoran said, "Nobody suspects a teacher of not knowing how to read." I assert some people don't suspect that there are teachers that really don't know their content, but no one suspects it because they managed to get hired as a teacher.

I once coached a teacher who did not understand figurative language at all. She had been teaching for years. I had to teach her the difference between a simile and a metaphor. I also had to teach her how to say hyperbole correctly. She pronounced it hyper-bowl. This is just one example of this teacher's deficits. I kept wondering how this teacher was able to keep a job. Her students' academic data was horrible.

It came down to out of sight, out of mind. The principal was not going around to classrooms much or attending planning meetings. The principal was clueless. After the teacher realized I was determined to coach her and teach her the content, she decided to resign. I think the teacher could have improved but my presence was disrupting her enjoyment of mediocrity. Her mediocrity equated to student failure.

Yes, we should be excited that an adult now knows how to read, but how he rationalized perpetrating as a real teacher, I will never understand. If we want to bring back value and prestige to the teaching profession, mediocre teachers have to go.