

Rest Easy, Dear Teacher...

by Ardith Shirley,
NBTA Staff Officer



Disclaimer: I write to you this month under the influence of far too much caffeine and suffering from too little sleep (join the club, says you! ☺). Further background context: I have attended the funerals or visitation of three of my former teachers in the last month, found out a good teacher friend has to face a long bout of chemotherapy treatment, and watched two other very good teacher friends grieve the loss of a parent.

Given all of this, I fully confess that I'm feeling rather weepy and nostalgic as I sit down to my keyboard. I expect this could be a dangerous combination when combined with an overdue deadline and two NBTA News pages to 'fill' with reflections on 'Growing, Living and Learning'... (Should you choose to read on, consider yourself warned.)

I'll begin at the end (seems an appropriate enough place, given the above disclaimer). Last week, we hosted a reception here at NBTA that saw a number of key leaders in education gathered. At one point, a short 'mixer' activity saw each person complete the following sentence starter: "I am the leader I am today, thanks to <INSERT NAME> seeing potential in me." It was an activity meant merely to get people talking, while giving a subtle nod to "Driving the Leadership Potential of Others" as the fourth of five Leadership Standards that, according to CAMET (Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training), we should all be striving towards.

The intended short 'conversation starter' turned into a rather magical experience as each of the 35+ people gathered formed an impromptu circle and listened intently as each leader shared their mentor's name and story. Here are my 'take-aways' from that experience:

- When people's hearts are touched, they can and will ignore a ringing cell phone, a timer and the fact they were supposed to be at another meeting 10 minutes ago.
- This eclectic room full of leaders BECAME who they were thanks to another, even more eclectic room full of leaders encouraging them. *(Despite the fact we are a small province and many of the leaders gathered were from the same 'era', only two of the leaders named the same person!)*
- Most of those gathered admitted that they had not had a chance to tell their mentor just how important they're encouragement was in their own personal development.
- Many of the conversations or stories shared as making a powerful difference by the leaders assembled were probably long forgotten or chalked up to 'every day' events or 'just doing my job' by the mentor. Many named would have been surprised and humbled.

Fast-forward (or is it rewind?) to the experience of saying a final goodbye to my three teachers: Mrs. Geraldine Shirley (Grade 2), Mrs. Betty MacDonald (Grades 9 and 10 and Cooperating Teacher STU Internship 2), and Mr. Bernard Sisk (Grades 9 to 12 History and dear CFAS Colleague). I'm sure I could write many pages in tribute to each of them, but for the purpose of brevity I share the following points on the facing page:



- Each of them created a VERY different classroom and school experience for me.
- I remember all three very FONDLY – for VERY different reasons.
- I've had great conversations and laughs with all three about the 'disasters' that may or may not have occurred in their classrooms. They would all consider themselves 'works in progress' for much of their teaching career, I am sure.
- I suspect all would have been pleasantly surprised by the many former students who showed up to honour them in the end. As different generations stood in long lines recounting many memories, each of us recalled something different... because each of them were different.
- Sadly, I recall very few of the details from their curricula. I guarantee, however, that I recall EVERY lesson learned by observing WHO they choose to be in the world.
- I am ashamed that I'm not sure I told them directly and specifically how important they were to me before it was too late. As I looked around those gathered at each of their tributes, I suspect I wasn't alone.

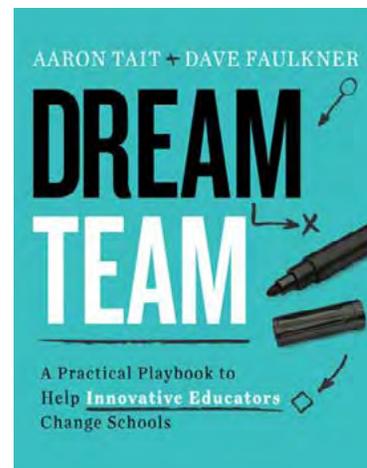
And so to end as I began, Dear Teacher, let me assure you that while you too may be operating on too much caffeine or too little sleep, with long lists of all the things you 'should and could' be doing, dancing through your head, take comfort in knowing that somewhere a student thinks of you fondly... and has probably never made the time to tell you.

And, while your teaching style and passions can never be EVERYTHING to EVERY child, EVERY day, the recollection of who you choose to be over the course of your time spent together in that sacred space called a classroom will cause that child (and maybe even your colleagues) to look back someday and recognize who you ARE today helped them BECOME – and in the end, isn't that EVERYTHING?

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Ardeith

Book Draw



Congratulations to **Mike Richard** in ASD-E, who is the winner of last month's book draw!

This month's draw is for **Dream Team: A Practical Playbook to Help Innovative Educators Change Schools** by Aaron Tait and Dave Faulkner. Sound interesting? Send me an email with the subject line 'Book Draw' by June 23rd.

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