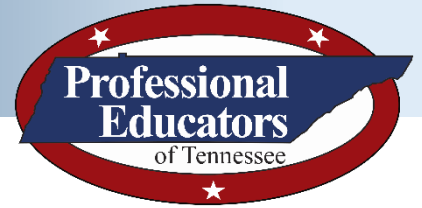


EDITORIAL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UNUSUAL TIMES, EXCEPTIONAL TEACHERS

Words alone never show how truly grateful our organization and millions of parents across the state are for everything you do and everything you are as a public-school educator. This school year was difficult for all of us in the state. We can all identify with the challenges. We recognize your herculean effort during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Educators have made so many changes on the fly this year. Classrooms were no longer confined to bricks and mortar. Many teachers never expected to be teaching online, let alone online and in-person at the same time. Schools became the epicenter to feed and continue to feed children in communities across the state. We watched mask debates take place, and wondered what people really looked like under that mask. If you accidentally coughed, you were quick to point out you were not sick. Social distancing became a new word and goal, as did many other medical terms. Now that we have a vaccine, many have restored hope for a return to normalcy.

We have heard from so many teachers that they are physically, emotionally, and mentally exhausted leading to burnout. [Psychology Today](#) describes burnout as "a state of chronic stress that leads to physical and emotional exhaustion, cynicism, detachment, and feelings of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment. Except this time, it was caused by events created by a pandemic way beyond our control. Educators need time to rest and re-energize.

Educators have done whatever was asked of them, no matter the physical or mental cost to themselves. The welfare of students was placed above all other considerations. Teaching has never been an eight-hour-a-day, five-day-a-week job. There are many duties that educators tackle that do not require pedagogical skills or experience in the classroom, but are necessary for the profession. "Improvise, Adapt, and Overcome," is a motto I learned in the Marine Corps. Educators learned to put those habits into action this year.

The world is filled with stories of success that started with just one person believing in another. You may not see immediate success, but by perseverance, you will ultimately see personal success, and the children in our public-school classrooms will be the ultimate winners. The lessons we learned this year will be put in our toolbox and used to shape the future and meet future challenges. We will never forget the lessons of this year, and neither will our students.

During this unusual time, we salute our exceptional educators across the state. Professional Educators of Tennessee remains committed to advocating on your behalf and delivering the necessary support you need to create better opportunities for almost a million public school students' success in the classroom. Our collaborative philosophy and non-partisan nature allow our organization to speak for classroom teachers, administrators, and para-professionals across Tennessee, which is something we will never take for granted.

SUMMARY

Words alone can never show how truly grateful our organization and millions of parents across the state are for everything that teachers do and everything you are as a public-school educators.

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JC Bowman is the Executive Director of Professional Educators of Tennessee, a non-partisan teacher association headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee. Permission to reprint in whole or in part is hereby granted, provided that the author and the association are properly cited. For more information on this subject or any education issue please contact Professional Educators of Tennessee. To schedule an interview please contact communications@proedtn.org or 1-800-471-4867.