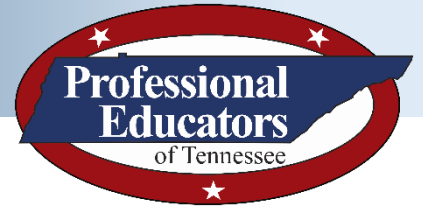


EDITORIAL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PUBLIC EDUCATION NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

Public education is about to be back in session for all students. Across Tennessee, districts are starting the journey back to school. It is an exciting time for students and teachers alike. After a pandemic-riddled break, we are starting a new academic year as normally as possible. Despite our best efforts, we learned that educational difficulties cannot always be solved by technology.

We all remember every new school year when we anticipated who would be in our class. As a student, we wondered who our teachers would be, and how many of our friends would be in our new classes. As teachers, we hoped we had eager students ready to learn. The hope of a new school year, the smell of a freshly painted school, new school clothes, and an abundance of school supplies bring about welcoming memories.

On a recent trip to my hometown of Cleveland, Tennessee, I ran into my former 4th-grade teacher Judy Gee. I was probably a student in one of her first classes at Arnold Elementary School. She was an incredible teacher, who lovingly and cheerfully challenged us to pursue academic excellence. She probably couldn't know the influence she had on my life. She, like so many other teachers, poured out their gifts to enrich my life. She made spelling fun, and today I still use that skill.

When I moved to Stuart Elementary School the next year, I had her sister Mary Painter as a math teacher. She was another great teacher. Later I was privileged to teach with their similarly talented sister, Alice Sherlin, in the Bradley County School system.

The legacy and impact of one family, in one community, are simply amazing. It is not uncommon to see education become a family business. The likely reason, in my opinion, is not that teaching is a genetic gift, but rather is learned and family members have natural built-in mentors. Educators must find a supportive environment in their school, and their professional association.

One of the goals of Professional Educators of Tennessee is to equip educators in Tennessee to succeed in public education and think differently about the profession of teaching. Educators have one of the most important jobs in our society, if we do not recognize that internally, it will not get recognized externally.

One of the most critical skills for success in public education is staying positive. This means staying away from chronically negative people. If you are constantly around pessimists, you may get sucked into the negativity, and it becomes toxic in your life and your career.

SUMMARY

As we are returning to school for the 2021-2022 school year, we could use your help and your support to educate ALL children to their highest potential. We need the public in public education.

Engaging students for learning involves creating a culture of hope and support. Negative people and negative organizations are not hopeful or supportive. People are quick to find fault with public education, and we acknowledge the factory model of education is dying a slow death across the nation.

At the same time, our educational competitiveness in America is still unparalleled. We tend to focus on our weaknesses, rather than leveraging our incomparable strengths. Unlike the United States, many nations around the world, place limits on access to education. In many countries, only the brightest are allowed to participate in secondary and higher education therefore their testing data comes only from these top tiered students.

However, in America, we believe that a child cannot succeed in life if they are denied the opportunities of quality education.

I have long held the premise that even though we cannot guarantee all children begin and end their formal education at the same level, we can guarantee all children have the same access to opportunities. That is why educators are so critical in the process. Not just those who teach the children, but administrators, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, and support personnel as well. We must also strengthen family engagement in our classrooms and schools.

It takes a team, a team of positive adults committed to children. We know that not all children have the luxury of having a nurturing home to grow up in, a proper diet, access to learning materials, and a support network to help them. Unfortunately, that is the world we live in, and if truth be told it has been this way for a while. We are going back to school for the 2021-2022 school year. We could use your help and your support to educate ALL children to their highest potential. We need the public in public education

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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.