



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## THE TOUGHEST JOB YOU WILL EVER LOVE

“I hope you find whatever it is you are looking for,” I tell people who can never seem to find joy in life. They look at me curiously. It was the response I wanted. Sophocles said, “Look and you will find it - what is unsought will go undetected.” Keep on seeking, and you will find it, or something will find you.

I am a seeker at heart. I have an innate appetite for adventure. I like learning new things. On vacation recently, I visited several museums. I wanted to learn about shipwrecks. I had read all about pirates as a kid. Like Jimmy Buffett pointed out “I’m an over-forty victim of fate.” So, it was shipwreck museums for me.

That is why I chose education as a career. Education had adventure, along with unpredictability and creativity. It has been quite the journey. I do not regret my career path. Nothing beats the sense of accomplishment that comes with a job with meaning and a rewarding mission that you embrace.

That is why I am heartbroken when so many educators are heading for the exits and will no longer make an impact on the lives of students.

I understand why people are not going into teaching. I also understand why they are leaving. We place barriers at the doorway and make prospective educators jump through unimaginable hoops to even enter the field.

It is not just heavy workload, poor salaries, or pointless legislation. We have stripped educators of the ability to create. We hold them accountable without listening to them. We have devalued their voices. While educators may be change-averse, they are not afraid to take risks. The only predictability in public education is unpredictability.

It appears that hope has vanished as bureaucrats and politicians have emphasized the wrong things. Most policymakers have never worked in a school or stood in front of a class of students. Some have limited involvement or a negative experience with public education. Educators did not create the standards, choose the curriculum, or buy the textbooks. Yet they endure these poor decisions. There is a feeling of emptiness when you feel you cannot do the job you are enthusiastic about because of unnecessary barriers.

Educators are leaving for other reasons as well, including student discipline issues, and a lack of support from the community. We place unrealistic expectations and unreasonable demands on our educators.

### SUMMARY

*Nothing beats the sense of accomplishment that comes with a job with meaning and a rewarding mission that you embrace.*

Educators do not feel welcome in their own careers. They do not feel like they are being listened to by parents or policymakers. They do not feel respected. It is a morale issue. And it is a crisis across the state and the nation. We may be at a tipping point.

Educators notice their former coworkers switching to other more lucrative careers. They make more money and gain a better work-life balance. Public education has lost many things over the years, but the loss of respect for those who educate our children is one that we may come to mourn the most, as educators continue walking out the door.

We must restore respect for educators. State and local leaders need to publicly step up their efforts to recognize educators. They need to visit more classrooms in their communities. They need to volunteer in schools. Ask for – *and listen to* – advice from those doing the difficult job of educating children. A genuine focus on educators with an investment in time and effort will go a long way.

Every teacher has a lifelong influence on their students throughout their career. For those still teaching, hang in there. Take one day at a time. For those who are contemplating teaching, please still consider it. Teaching is the hardest job you will ever love. Martin Luther King, Jr., reminded us that “faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase.” Just step out on faith. You just might find what you are looking for in life.

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