



Commissioner's

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Comments

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#LoveTeaching

In 2015, Valentine's Day moved beyond the traditional roses and chocolates that are associated with February 14 and the celebration of love. A number of national and state Teachers of the Year started a Twitter movement called the #LoveTeaching campaign. The point of the campaign is to celebrate the profession of teachers by talking about the positive impacts teachers have on their students.

I cannot think of a better thing to "tweet" about. Not a day goes by that I do not miss my classroom. I think back to 1991 and my first year at Sandy Creek High School in Tyrone, Georgia. I loved being there. I loved everything about it. I loved the opportunity to teach science to students. What I quickly realized was that I was teaching far more than chemistry. As much as I helped shape my students' lives, they too shaped my future. #LoveTeaching should be a time for our educators to share those experiences with others.

The 1995 film, *Mr. Holland's Opus*, touchingly portrays the relationship between a teacher and his students. While many of my performing arts friends might say the music played in the final scene was far from perfect, to me the scene was more about the man, Mr. Holland, than his music. It was about an individual who selflessly gave of himself to help his students excel. It was about a person, a teacher, who became a compass for his students, and in the process unknowingly changed their lives, as they did his.

While perhaps not as poignant as was portrayed on the silver screen, I too have experienced this reality of teaching. I think of a young lady who took my ninth grade physical science class. She was into all sorts of things that she should not have been. She hated school, hated everything about it really. She sat in front of the room and over time I was able to build some good will. She went on to graduate and I always wondered what happened to her. Several years ago I got a Facebook request and an incredible note from her. She was studying to be a nurse. She told me that as much as she complained about my class at the time, there was something that stuck with her – I believed in her and that she could be better than what she was. Wow, for me, that defines gratification!

Other situations come to mind – like the student who comes up to you at the grocery store and hugs you for no reason. Or the student who leaves the card on your desk declaring, "You will never die. The character, integrity and drive you have given me will be passed to my children and throughout the generations. You are immortal." Then there's the 6'4" cross country runner who ran his first 5k in 48 minutes and his last race in his senior year in 23 minutes. As he crosses the finish line, he whispers, "Thank you for never giving up on me." And who could forget the student who became a teacher because she saw in you the passion for providing a better future for your students.

These are the stories that make me #LoveTeaching. There are millions of them that we must celebrate.

Teachers impact future generations each and every day, and we form the only profession that leads to all others. I hope you will join me in celebrating the profession of teaching every day, but especially in the coming week.

While I am proud to be the Commissioner of Education in Kentucky, for the next week I plan to participate in #LoveTeaching and show my pride first and foremost that I am a teacher.

#LoveTeaching lasts from February 14-22. I encourage Kentucky teachers to share their stories, videos and blogs for the entire state and the world to see. Teachers are members of the greatest profession on Earth, and it is time for the light that guides our students to be seen by everyone.

