Introduction

What does teaching look like at its very best? How are great teachers able to ignite the love of learning among their students and change students’ lives? What are the keys to accelerating learning among both teachers and students?

The new book, *The Best Teacher In You*, provides revealing answers to these important questions. Two leaders of the Center for Positive Organizations (Robert E. Quinn and Gretchen Spreitzer) combine with two leaders of Battelle for Kids (Katherine Heynoski and Mike Thomas) to offer powerful new insights about the mindsets, behaviors, and change processes of highly effective teachers.

This book examines the ways in which highly effective teachers accelerate learning and change lives. These teachers were identified through classroom-level value-added data, which make it possible to identify teachers who consistently produce greater than expected academic growth across all levels of the academic spectrum. A key difference in the approach adopted in this book is that it is designed to liberate excellence rather than simply produce proficiency. It will help you recognize and release the potential in you and others around you.

Over the last six years, the authors have assembled groups of teachers to better understand how they think about and conduct their practice. As these teachers talked to us and to each other about their practice, we began to understand that something out of the ordinary was happening in their classrooms. Not only do these teachers produce higher than expected test scores, they also change lives.

This book offers a framework of hypotheses about teaching and learning that have been derived from the experiences of highly effective teachers. The framework is designed to disrupt your beliefs about yourself, about teaching, and about learning. It is designed to entice you into more thoughtful experiments about effective practice. Chapters are built around stories of highly effective teachers’ development. These teachers talk explicitly about how they learned their way toward more effective and more impactful practice. Through their stories, you will better understand how to bring out the best teacher in you.
Chapters at a Glance

Chapter 1 shares Kelli’s story to differentiate conventional teaching from adaptive teaching. Both models are necessary, but the capacity to merge adaptive teaching with conventional teaching produces deeper and more personally relevant learning for all students.

Chapter 2 reveals Diana’s story to introduce the BFK•Connect® Framework. This framework enables us to differentiate four dimensions of effective teaching and to better understand how these dimensions are integrated in the classrooms of highly effective teachers.

Chapter 3 tells Aaron’s story to illustrate how structures and processes can be used as starting points to organize a teacher’s practice. But just as important, practice must go beyond these structural elements. Once he opened his mind to the other dimensions of effectiveness, Aaron was able to build a practice that effectively integrates all four dimensions of the framework.

Chapter 4 introduces Sarah. Rather than organizing her practice around structures and processes, Sarah organizes her classroom around relationships and trust. We describe how she integrates the other dimensions of the framework into her practice. In doing so, we shed light on how to work more effectively with troubled or disengaged students.

Chapter 5 explores how Laurie became more self-empowered as a teacher. Laurie’s capacity to find meaning and develop competence has moved her toward a greater sense of autonomy and impact with her students.

Chapter 6 shares how Vicki exercises transformative influence to bring out the best in her students. She is not only self-empowering, she also empowers her students.

Chapter 7 features Michelle’s story to show how the BFK•Connect® Framework can be used in a systematic way to develop your own practice. Meaningful development is contingent upon focused practice, collegial support, and thoughtful experimentation. When these things happen systematically, it is possible to integrate adaptive and conventional strategies to produce more powerful and impactful practice.

Looking Forward

The Best Teacher in You closes with an invitation to look forward and envision the teacher you want to become. The book introduces seven remarkable teachers and their stories of failure, learning, and ultimately deep change. It is a journey that these teachers continue every day because the best teacher in them is constantly unfolding as they engage in real-time learning with their students.

At times, this journey can be lonely and challenging, but it is also incredibly rewarding. We hope this book inspires you to begin your own journey to find the best teacher in you again and again. And, we offer several starting points, collaboration tools, and other support resources that you can use independently and in collaboration with colleagues to become… The Best Teacher in You.

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