

INSPIRED TO INSPIRE

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As William Arthur Ward puts it,

*The mediocre teacher tells.
The good teacher explains.
The superior teacher demonstrates.
The great teacher inspires.*

I have had the privilege of having many inspiring teachers and mentors. My hope is to be for my students what my teachers and mentors have been for me, so that they, too, will pass on their inspirational stories and good values to people they meet in life.

Influencing Priorities

*If I were not a student, now what would I rather be?
Author unknown*

This line from a campfire song goes on to describe the nature of various jobs. When I first heard it in primary school, it prompted me to start thinking seriously about my future. I realised that I had to work hard so that I could get closer to my dreams.

In my encounters with students who preferred outside employment to applying themselves in school, I endeavoured to help them focus on their studies, so that they could perceive the value of education. I shared examples of family and friends who treasured any opportunity to learn and had worked their way up. Through Character and Citizenship Education lessons, I guided them to discover their strengths and weaknesses so that they would make an informed choice about their future educational pathways. These experiences gave my students hope.

It was encouraging to see my students take this advice to heart. I hope to inspire my students to dream, work hard and reach their goals and aspirations, just as I have.

Another's Shoes

In the book, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Atticus Finch teaches his daughter Scout that “you never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view ... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.” I believe this captures the essence of what teachers do and the pains they take in understanding their students. I have learnt to always hear the whole story, and put myself in their shoes first before I respond. The key is to listen and understand the student's predicament, withhold judgment, and respond with empathy.

Sometimes, a student might be misbehaving because of a lack of routines, or a poorly pitched lesson. Another student might be struggling to stay awake in class because she had to take care of her ailing grandparent the night before, or was late for school because he has to commute long distances.

This empathy also helps me to create a motivational environment for authentic learning. Students want to know *why* they learn what they are learning. They want to see the relevance of mathematical transformations in daily living. They want to ascertain the purpose of exploring the digestive system. When I see things from their perspective, I see endless opportunities and possibilities. They see that I'm on their side and am willing to learn, ask questions, and make mistakes together with them, which all lead to engaging and interesting lessons – both for them and for me.

I hope to inspire my students to be active citizens, the future leaders of tomorrow, and experts in the fields of their passion – a new generation of future mathematicians, scientists, researchers, poets and human beings who live out their passion.

Role-Modelling

As teachers, our students look up to us even when we don't feel up to it at times. They see our actions, hear our words, catch our mannerisms, and uncover our belief systems. My values are what they are because I live them out. I am truthful about my setbacks with my students. As a fallible person, I make mistakes and face the music. Everyone will experience setbacks at some point. But the way we pick ourselves up determines the type of person we are. I hope to inspire my students to have good values and a strong belief system, as well as to stand up for what is right and pick themselves up if they fall.

I have encountered teachers who conduct themselves with integrity and good conscience. If a lesson should be truncated, stopped or postponed for a teachable moment to foster good values, it is definitely worthwhile.

I have been inspired to inspire by my students, one of whom gave me this message: *"To the world you may be just a teacher, but to your students you are a hero."*