

Preface

Deliberate Optimism: Reclaiming the Joy in Education is a book for anyone involved in education. It is written by three lifelong educators who cumulatively have taught almost every kind of student at every grade level.

Whether you are a beginning PreK teacher, a veteran high school department chair, a school leader, or anyone in between, you will find inspiration for doing what you currently do as well as positive, pragmatic steps you can take to build or maintain a sense of autonomy, competence, and relevance in your role.

Each chapter covers a different aspect of maintaining optimism in an educational setting. Through research-based strategies, practical examples, and thought-provoking scenarios, the authors provide food for thought along with enough humor to make the journey fun. Discussion questions and action steps follow each chapter, and an appendix of further activities is provided at the end of the book.

Chapter 1, Choosing to Become a Teacher Is a Telling Vote for Optimism, outlines the Five Principles of Deliberate Optimism, provides a rationale for each, and gives examples of how they work in actual practice. This chapter frames the foundation for the rest of the book.

Chapter 2, I'm Not an Optimist, but Hopefully, One Day I Will Be, explains the basic concept of optimism, what it is and what it is not. It describes a model for deliberately maintaining our positive view on events that are beyond our control.

Chapter 3, "But We Have This ONE Teacher Who Keeps Ruining Things for Everyone!" examines differences in learning styles, extrovert/introvert tendencies, and generational differences to help better understand ourselves and how we can interact more positively with colleagues.

Essentials for Happiness

- Something to love
- Something to do
- Something to hope for

—Author unknown

Chapter 4, Building Healthy Relationships and an Optimistic Shared Community, considers the thorny issue of dealing with colleagues who are dysfunctional and/or who drain your spirit. Tips are provided for building a positive shared community.

Chapter 5, Creating the Optimistic Classroom: Building a Relationship Culture, explores the importance of joy and optimism as it relates to the most important aspect of education—the students—by building positive relationships with them. Fostering healthy interactions among students is also discussed.

Chapter 6, Reclaiming the Joy in Our Classrooms and Our Curriculum, summarizes how teachers can restore and maintain joy in their individual classrooms not only through engaging activities, but also by personalizing their domains.

Chapter 7, Balancing Your Life to Promote Optimism, reflects on what personal responsibility and choices have to do with our overall optimism. With both humor and fact the authors highlight the importance of taking care of oneself.

Chapter 8, Joyful School Communities: The Sum of Their Parts, looks at what administrators, parents, and local communities can do to help restore optimism and hope in our nation's schools as well as what teachers can do beyond their own classrooms.

Readers of this book will

- Be able to employ purposeful, intentional strategies to maintain a sense of optimism about their work
- Receive valuable insights on dealing with differing and/or difficult people in the profession
- Understand the importance of maintaining one's sense of self as well as one's health
- Obtain valuable ideas for fostering a positive school community