

What They Never Tell You

The Secrets Behind PD for Teachers

You devote yourself to this work because you believe. You know teachers make a real and lasting impact on their students. And you want to help your teachers be effective and experience joy in their classrooms.

But as you stand in front of your teachers, gearing up for an afternoon of professional development, the smile on your face hides what you know deep down. You know the truth. You've been doing this long enough and you've seen the data.



You know, no matter how good you are, or how much you care, 90% of what you teach these beautiful, generous, devoted teachers will never make it to the classroom. Never help their students. In reality, it may even leave them more frustrated than when they began. Sitting through a mandatory process cultivates more eye-rolls and sighs than insights and inspiration.



It's not about your knowledge or skills, or your preparation. You are good, really good and you work as hard as anyone. And you know what really works. More time, sustained coaching, opportunities to commune, share, co-create and collaborate...Not a three-hour firehose, followed by "best of luck."

You'd love to scrap the canned talking points and actually offer **REAL** and **EFFECTIVE** professional development!

But how can you given all the barriers: the latest contract, a fixed calendar, a small budget, and a lack of a growth mindset by so many?



You've read about that rare outlier, the professional development that somehow breaks through, lights teachers up and supports them on a level and changes the game both for them, and for their students... but no one describes how they did it. What made them so successful.

You are at a total loss as to what to do. You want things to be different, but you have absolutely no buy-in from "higher ups" and there's not enough of you to go around. That has been your reality thus far, you've just assumed, "It is what it is. All I can do is my best."

But what if that was a lie?
What if things actually could be **DIFFERENT?**

Imagine how it would feel to stand before a room of teachers expecting the “same old, same old,” and instead wake them up, grab their attention, rekindle a sense of curiosity and hope; and deliver compassionate professional development that builds competence and confidence, that validates teachers’ natural sense of wonder, and supports their well-being along the way?

This can be your reality.

It starts with being open, believing in the possibility of a different way.

The contract, the fixed calendar, the budget, and difficult colleagues may persist. Even in the face of these challenges, they are not roadblocks to success.

It’s time to take the reins, to create a new reality grounded in these two core beliefs. When these beliefs are embraced, they grant you full access to unimaginable growth and change.





Core Belief #1:

Teachers have value and power

Teachers deserve creative and intensive opportunities to grow and learn

Teachers excel when given choices and share in decision-making

Teachers, when truly supported, are able to work at their highest capacity...from a place of compassion, hope, and love



Core Belief #2:

Relationships between children and teachers are critical to success

Children thrive when teachers are intentional and spontaneous

Children thrive when teachers are accountable and creative

Children thrive when teachers are data-driven and heartfelt

Building on these beliefs, professional development shifts from mandatory and devalued to **UTILIZED** and **TREASURED**.



These beliefs are the foundation for professional development and learning that not only trains and educates teachers, but inspires them to regain their passion for helping children thrive in school and life.

The “on-the-ground” starting point - where the rubber meets the road, is reimagining how professional development and learning is delivered. Rethinking how content is prioritized, and viewing the adult learner in a new light.

Simply put, the adult learner is in the driver’s seat. And how content is delivered, is personalized.

A guide to:

Effective professional development and learning



THE ADULT LEARNER IS:

- Engaged in mind, body, and heart
- Given relief from other responsibilities to make room for change
- Given adequate time to learn about and apply key principles
- Supported at different stages of learning and application



THE CONTENT IS:

- Connected to the situation and setting and can be applied immediately
- Concrete and addresses everyday challenges
- Aligned to other initiatives and agreed upon values
- Cyclic, dynamic, and driven by significant learning outcomes



ESSENTIAL TOOLS:

- Sufficient support, practice, and real-life examples
- Opportunities to consider how to modify principles and to receive feedback
- Opportunities for collaboration and guided discussions with colleagues
- A variety of delivery methods, levels of intensity, and degrees of individualization

When professional development and learning is viewed as continuous, it lights up teachers and reconnects them to their purpose and new possibilities in the classroom.

And, the great thing about this shift, you don't have to blow everything up you've done to date to reclaim this new, empowered ethos.

Some of the things that you are already doing can work!

An effective model of professional development and learning is flexible enough to allow you to offer brief and inspiring talks by experts and even continue to sponsor conferences or institutes.

What's different then?

Basically...a single question is used to drive all professional development and learning decisions.





“How can professional development and learning engage a teacher’s mind, body, and heart?”

As you consider this question, your cynical self may scoff at the idea... “How indeed?” That’s a ludicrous metric. It’s “soft.” And, I work in a hard-edged, fixed, constrained system!”

No doubt, the challenges are still there, but this simple yet profound shift in the question you ask makes all the difference. It ensures you achieve practices guided by compassion and that lead to significant outcomes for children. It ensures a dynamic approach to supporting adult learners.

How do I know this?

Because I’ve spent my adult life validating the approach and helping people just like you do what they never thought possible.

My own journey started at the University of Oregon and continued as I became a professor at Kent State University. And while I loved my job as a faculty member and international speaker, I was on the constant look-out for something different. Something different than preparing for another course, or offering training to a group of teachers I would see once, and never again.

I longed to provide professional development and learning that would have a **LASTING IMPACT**.

I knew that if I could better support early educators, they would have a direct and positive impact on the children and families they served. I tried joining groups and learning communities dedicated to teaching adults. I tried every new technology that came my way. I even had a line of research devoted to examining effective adult learning practices.

Yet, I continued to feel dissatisfied and began to doubt I had made the right career choice. Whether I was teaching online or on ground...I felt something was missing.

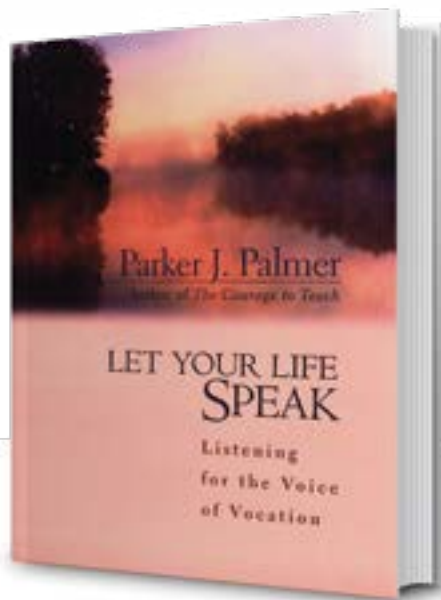


I tried to quiet the unease by securing more grants to test out the latest innovations and searching for more and more creative ways to teach adults.

In the end, I found myself as a full professor with tenure and as a respected speaker and researcher. I had prepared hundreds of master's degree and doctoral students, and thousands of direct service providers in over 30 states and four countries. But...I was still left wondering if I had made a difference.

The truth was, most days I felt like I was going through the motions... delivering another lecture, facilitating another online discussion, giving another keynote....and to what end?

Then I read Parker J. Palmer's "*Let Your Life Speak*" while on sabbatical in 2013. His writings about the courage to teach, the aim to live an authentic life, and an emphasis on wholeness, resonated so strongly with me that I became determined to find a way to make a greater impact with the professional development and learning I offered.



I began to understand that when I helped early educators work from a place of wonder and joy, and a place driven by compassion instead of compliance...there was a greater impact. In fact, there was a change in the way that they cared for and educated children.

So, I resigned from my faculty position, thinking the answer was just beyond the ivory tower.

But the answer wasn't just beyond the tower...

In fact, I was left wondering more than ever; who I was, what I was doing, and questioning my decision to leave the security, the colleagues, and the work I had been immersed in for so long at the university.

I struggled because many of the new partnerships I formed failed and grants I applied for were not funded. I found myself exhausted from hopping from one speaking engagement to the next.





I also experienced a level of **APATHY** that made it hard to stand in front of the adult learners I had committed my life to serve.

What was I to do? How was delivering more “sit and get” going to solve the real problems early educators face? How was I part of the solution, when in truth, I felt more like part of the problem?

It wasn't that I needed new techniques or the latest in collaborative technologies.

What was needed was time spent turned inward.

More time for contemplative reflection and dialogue...and more time creating connections between what early educators know to be right for children.

I began to once again embrace my vocation as a teacher, but this time, as a teacher who sought to bring wholeness, not more fragmentation...one who understood the power of the heart as much as the power of the mind.




But with this understanding also came fear and anxiety.

Fear of sounding a bit odd in this age of accountability. Fear of appearing to be against the prevalent trend which is to value cognitive skills over all others.

How was I going to live out my passion of elevating the spirit and practices of early educators so they could, in turn, elevate the lives of children and families?

After my own searching, and somewhere near 50,000 hours of working with adults, I found the answer.



The answer is:
“both/and” not “either/or”.

Meaning, I could be both an early interventionist and an agent of change. For example, I could apply both what I know about early development and how to leverage that knowledge to change the way children are educated. I could also deliver professional development and learning that supported both the early educators and the children. For example, when teaching how to promote children’s social-emotional health and well-being, I could spend equal amounts of time on how to promote the health and well-being of early educators.

This realization created a shift and new path in my work with adult learners. A path where asking one simple question became a **GAME CHANGER**.

In fact, it led to the creation of a straightforward professional development and learning approach. An approach that ensures teachers work from a place of wholeness, wonder, and intentionality.

In my approach, I increase the competence and confidence of early educators across a variety of recommended practices. Simultaneously, I strengthen their social-awareness, self-regulation, and social awareness skills. Here's what one early educator had to say about my approach to professional development and learning,

"Kristie is motivating and inspirational. She validated my convictions about teaching the "soft skills". I appreciate all the research based information that we can use to convince other stakeholders of the value of teaching these skills."



And we all know, when children are taught from a place of wholeness, wonder, and intentionality, we are effectively working towards our goal of all children thriving in school and in life!

Exciting to think of such an approach isn't it?

And what's even more exciting is, as you become proficient with the approach, professional development and learning becomes highly differentiated. This means we practice what we preach.

We teach different outcomes to the same group of adult learners simultaneously. We begin to rethink expectations of how teachers spend their time. And, we are better able to account for individual development and learning interests and needs.



Are you ready to learn how you can offer effective professional development and learning?

If your answer is **YES**, then start by taking the simplest step forward. A step away from professional development that doesn't have an impact, a step away from feeling powerless and defeated in your attempts to get to a change in practice.

Start...by joining our community of changemakers. We are a social network of like-minded early childhood leaders.

You'll get first alerts for courses and events, free training videos, and a variety of other tools - from blogs to infographics - designed to see you succeed.

JOIN TODAY!

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