

I believe that education goes far beyond the walls of the classroom, and the teacher's domain stretches far beyond her desk. In such a multifaceted career, very few people truly understand what a teacher does. I believe that to be a great teacher, one must excel in the eyes of all who watch her, seamlessly blending the many tasks into a clean presentation of her work. Each group with whom English teachers interact sees only a small piece of what they truly do. A good teacher will succeed in the eyes of some, but a great teacher finds ways to balance the responsibilities and impress everyone.

Students see the lesson plans, the assessments, the rubrics and the classroom management. They see the connections that a teacher can make with each of her pupils, and they see the benefits of that relationship. When English teaching is done well, they will see the connections between literature and life, and they will see the world through different perspectives. They will see themselves as writers, critics, literary analysts and poets. However, the students will not see the planning, the collaboration with colleagues or the complex politics behind the agenda written on the board.

Administrators see the results; they see the test scores that are generally used to represent student progress and teacher efficacy. Regardless of whether or not these numbers are the best way to represent these things, a good teacher will find a way to produce test scores that represent the district honorably and reaffirm the community's faith in the schools. A good teacher knows that standardized assessments do not reflect the personal and creative aspect of the classroom, but a great teacher will make sure that she does anything possible to help prepare her students to succeed by these standards without compromising the personal aspect of the classroom.

Society sees the products of the classroom—the alumni who go on and become politicians, nurses, scientists and scholars. Society does not see the rough drafts and the revisions made in the process of shaping these individuals, and sometimes society forgets that those politicians, nurses, scientists and scholars were students first. Regardless, a good teacher mindfully works with each young student to find his or her full potential in growing and developing. A great teacher does this while understanding the personal plight of each student, valuing him or her as an individual whose potential is truly infinite.

A good teacher is balanced, courageous and intentional. A great teacher is all of these things and also empathetic, patient, and ferociously passionate. A great teacher stands up for herself, her district and her students. A good teacher can support the difficult decisions that she makes with sound reasoning and strong, honorable values; a great teacher can admit when she needs help, and actively searches for resources that will

help her to contribute to the community in positive ways. A good teacher is a resource to others; a great teacher, beyond this, knows she is still a learner of the world just like her students.

A good teacher is professionally trained, and an expert in her field. A great teacher is mindful not only of the educational policies that affect her classroom, but also of those belonging to the people who disagree with her decisions. A great teacher does not fear opposition, but welcomes it as a learning opportunity. A good teacher welcomes students to ask, "Why?" in the classroom. A great teacher asks herself this question in advance as she prepares each lesson. A good teacher believes in equal education; a great teacher believes in equitable education.

As an educator, I strive to always be better. I do not want to set my goals in line with my understanding of a good teacher. I want to be a great teacher, and I believe that great teachers help those around them to be great as well. I believe that teachers can only achieve greatness with the help and support of a great administration and a great community; in return, great teachers produce great students who become great in the roles that they will assume in their post-graduate lives. It is not easy to achieve greatness, but I believe that high standards inevitably yield high-quality results. I hold myself to high standards because to compromise would be a disservice to my colleagues and my students. When good teachers challenge themselves, they find opportunity to become great.