

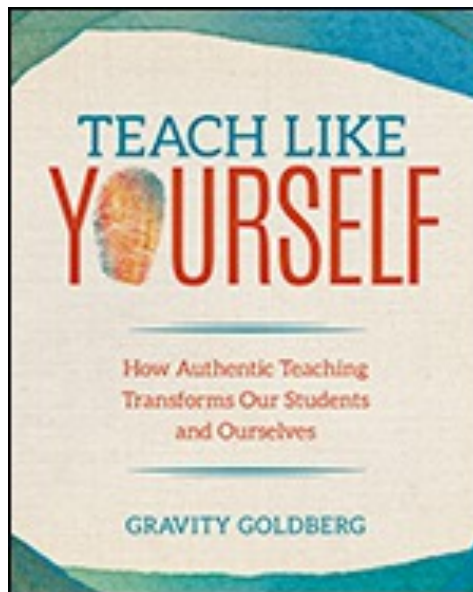
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*Teach Like Yourself: How Authentic Teaching Transforms Our Students
and Ourselves*

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Teach Like Yourself: How Authentic Teaching Transforms Our Students and Ourselves makes a significant contribution to teacher development and preparation by presenting strategies that teachers may use to reach their highest potential as professional educators, while remaining connected to their teacher-selves, individual beliefs, goals, and understandings of the learners with whom they work and their needs. Through authentic and powerful stories, Goldberg encourages in-service and pre-service teachers to be bold and true to themselves in order to reach all children in their classrooms and to remain in the classroom for many years. Her writing is engaging, personal, powerful, and research-based. Although it's not explicitly stated, the book seems to be written with elementary school teachers in mind; however, I know that Goldberg's goal was more inclusive. Therefore, I suggest two additions: 1) since this book would be a wonderful tool for an introduction to education or a foundations in education course, the author could add the voices of pre-service teacher candidates representing different subject areas; and 2) in order to connect with a wider audience, the author could include a multiplicity of learners' voices so educators who teach a variety of age groups can see themselves in it.

The United States is currently suffering from a shortage of qualified teachers that affects certain geographical areas and certain subject matters more than others. Teacher attrition that takes place within the first three to five years of starting a teaching career (Auletto, 2017; Education International, 2017) and an overall national decline in enrollment in teacher preparation programs (Castro et al., 2018) have contributed to a teacher shortage in the United States. Viadero (2018) reminds us to be cautious when talking about

teacher shortages in the U.S. because “at a broad national level, statistics tell us that there is no teacher shortage.... [however,] that doesn't mean the teacher shortages aren't real.... In certain states and districts... teacher shortages are a recurring fact of life” (p. 1). So why are teachers leaving the profession? Ingersoll (2001) and Viadero (2018) indicate that this decline is partly due to issues that directly impact teachers' agency and beliefs about education, as well as teacher self-government and independence. These authors state: “limited faculty input into school decision-making” (Ingersoll, p. 2) and a restricted or reduced “level of autonomy to teach the way [they] thinks is best [and minimal] leadership” opportunities (Viadero, 2018, p. 4), as examples. To these, Goldberg adds “an overemphasis on accountability, standards, testing, and a narrative of mistrust of teachers' expertise” (p. xvii). In this book, Goldberg proactively addresses these dissatisfactions and offers alternative practices for improved school climates that develop relationships and successful, sustaining careers in education.

Teach Like Yourself: How Authentic Teaching Transforms Our Students and Ourselves comes accompanied with six ancillary materials: 1) videos for each of the chapters of no more than 5 minutes in length (there is a QR code included in the book for each of the videos at the beginning of each chapter); 2) a companion website¹, a Facebook Group moderated by the author² where she has led a book study for this text; 3) a Twitter handle @drgravity and hashtag #teachlikeyourself; 4) the *Teach Like Yourself Manifesto* (poster and also on p. 132); 5) a Study Guide for the text (found in the Appendix of the book starting on p. 135); and 6) an online Facilitator's Guide in PowerPoint format. On p. 133, Goldberg shares her email address and encourages readers to connect with her to ask

¹ <https://resources.corwin.com/teachlikeyourself>

² <https://www.facebook.com/groups/teachlikeyourself/about/>

questions and share experiences. This multimodal approach to delivering and connecting with the readership might appeal to and reach a diverse group of readers and is a wonderful way to create community in varied ways.

Teach Like Yourself: How Authentic Teaching Transforms Our Students and Ourselves is divided into a Preface and seven chapters. The **Preface**, written by the author, includes her reasons for writing this book; for example: “to try to quell the teacher burnout I see all around” and to combat teacher attrition (p. xvii); draws attention to three recurring features in this text, namely *personal stories*, *research-based practices*, and *invitations to reflect*; and explains how the text can be used as a self-coaching tool. The rest of the book is divided into seven multilayered chapters, which include a plethora of information on multiple topics within the main umbrella topic of the title.

Chapter one, “Authentic Teaching,” provides the foundation for the rest of the book by introducing the meaning of *authentic teaching* and its importance in teachers’ daily lives. By “authentic teaching” Goldberg means teaching like oneself and not copying or pretending to be someone one is not. This chapter also introduces the importance of being genuine to one’s teaching beliefs. The author invites the readership to engage with this chapter by asking themselves the following question: “What does it mean to me to be an authentic teacher right now?” (p. xviii). In a self-help style, Goldberg reminds the audience that they are enough, that there is nothing to fix, and that they should “view each day as a learning opportunity... from a place of humble confidence” (p. 7). To cement these beliefs, she suggests two strategies: 1) that one should not compare oneself to others because comparisons are based on half or no truth; to this she writes, “When I compare myself to others, I tend to paint them in the rosier light and see only their strengths” (p. 5);

and 2) that one should focus on what one can control, for example, course goals created by teachers with the learners they work with in mind. As part of creating a habit of reflection that encourages readers to think and write about their current practice, Goldberg creates spaces for self-reflection and introspection. In this chapter, readers are invited to consider their beliefs regarding authenticity in teaching and shifts one may wish to make to alter one’s current perceptions or thoughts. Goldberg ends the chapter by briefly presenting the five practices she will then develop in chapters two through six and by sharing a piece of advice: “Trust yourself. You will know what is right. Listen to your instincts” (p. 19). This advice echoes Seiki’s (2016) message on the importance of bringing one’s multiple identities to curriculum design and teaching.

Chapters two through six, describe, discuss, and exemplify five core practices, which constitute the central part and essence of this text: *Name Your Core Belief* (chapter 2), *View Your Teaching as a Practice* (chapter 3), *Build Balanced Relationships* (chapter 4), *Drive Professional Growth* (chapter 5), *Take Care of Yourself* (chapter 6).

In **chapter two**, “Name Core Beliefs,” Goldberg encourages readers to keep in mind the following question as they read: “What are my core beliefs about teaching?” (p. xix). Having a clear reason why something is important to us as teachers makes it easier to implement in the classroom and to defend if questioned by parents, administrators, or learners. “As teachers,” Goldberg writes, “we must first get super clear on the why of our work, on our core beliefs, before we create plans for what and how we will teach” (p. 24). In *Understanding by Design*, Wiggins and McTighe (2005) also remind us of the importance of thinking and asking ourselves *why* we, for example, ask learners to read a particular type of text or complete a certain type of assignment

(pp. 15-7). Not having a clear answer to *why* would create confusion for the teacher and learners alike. After clarifying one's purpose for teaching one can figure out the *what* and the *how*. But knowing *why*, *what*, and *how* is not enough. Teachers need to know their students well in order to engage and motivate them. Goldberg draws on Ferlazzo's (2012) concept of *agitation*, defined as: "challenging [students] to do something *they* want to do" (in Goldberg, 2019, p. 27) in order to motivate learners. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can meet when teachers know their learners well and are able to combine instructional goals with learners' interests and funds of knowledge (Moll et al, 1992) in order to harness their passions and energy to make learning more interesting, fun, and motivating for everyone involved. Goldberg writes: "When we know what our students value and believe, we can shape the ways we teach and the choices we offer students to match. This is using agitation" (p. 28). Goldberg concludes the chapter with a two-part guided introspective exercise that encourages readers to: 1) identify and unpack personal core beliefs, and 2) consider ways of "uncovering" learners' beliefs in order to reach the chapter's goal of naming one's core beliefs.

Chapter three, "Teaching as a Practice," reminds the readers that teaching and learning are ongoing journeys that rely on practice. Defined by Yogi Trish Huston (2013), practice is trying "things that we can't already do—to take chances, to make mistakes, and in short, to learn." (p. 46 in Goldberg, 2019). The suggested undergirding question for this chapter is: "How can I align my teaching practices more fully to my core beliefs?" (p. xix). Seeing teaching as practice creates opportunities for teachers and learners to co-create the experience and invites flexibility, creativity, and responsiveness to learners', teachers', and environmental needs. Nation and Macalister (2010) write about the importance of completing needs assessments and environment analysis

whenever possible prior and through a teaching experience. These tools afford educators the ability to be "aware of the conditions of learning [that allow] us to practice mindfully" (p. 49, Goldberg, 2019); this awareness allows teachers to create curricula that place learners at the center of the teaching/learning equation. It is common for teachers to tell their learner that it is OK if they do not know everything and that learning is a journey. Goldberg encourages teachers to practice what they preach and become comfortable not knowing everything. Maintaining a spirit of curiosity and a genuine interest in learning with and about their learners strengthens classroom and school communities because there is vulnerability and trust that grows from learning and growing together.

Chapter four, "Build Balanced Relationships" is based on the premise that humans crave meaningful relationships and that professional educators benefit from relating well to themselves (the power of positive self-talk), colleagues (real and virtual), and learners and their families. Goldberg suggests that readers consider the following question as we read this chapter: "How can I build stronger and more balanced relationships with my colleagues, students, and their families?" (p. xix). With regard to strong relationships to *self*, Goldberg writes about the importance of positive self-talk and self-efficacy, i.e., "the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce outcomes (p. 193, Bandura, 1977; cited on p. 68, Goldberg). In quoting John Hattie (2016) who writes, "teachers who share a sense of collective teacher efficacy have the biggest impact on student achievement" (p. 69), Goldberg makes the case for having strong relationships with *colleagues* and suggests creating Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as one way of doing this. Dobbs, Ippolito, and Charner-Laird (2017) see PLCs as a core professional learning structure that provide participants with additional encouragement and support in attempting various new instructional

strategies while keeping them accountable in implementing and documenting (collecting data) successful adaptations of instructional strategies. In building relationships with *learners*, the underlying message is that learners who feel loved, respected, and heard, tend to give more of themselves in the learning process, which results in better behavior, higher achievement, and happier children. Last but not least, Goldberg writes about the importance of creating strong relationships with learners' *families* from the very beginning of the school year.

Henderson and Whipple (2013) state that “strong ties with families and community can make it *four times* more likely that ...students will make major gains in math and reading” (p. 44). Building strong connections with families early on will draw more parental participation, create trusting relationships, and in the case that a less pleasant call is ever needed later on in the year, parents will be more receptive, responsive, and possibility more willing to work with the child and the teacher to correct a situation or behavior. The last part of the chapter takes the reader on a journey to explore how to best build the types of relationships presented in the chapter (self, colleagues, learners, and families) insisting that “when relationships with ourselves or others are less than optional it feels like there are roadblocks and blind spots so that we actually can't move in that direction... [which] prevent me from teaching fully as myself” (p. 82).

In **Chapter five** “Drive Professional Growth,” Goldberg suggests that readers begin the process of selecting professional development and engaging in growth by introspectively considering their strengths, challenges, and *unexplored territories*, which she defines as “an aspect of your teaching practice that you rarely, if ever explore” (p. 89). Once these three areas have been named, one can proceed to create professional development goals and select professional development opportunities.

The underlying suggested question for this chapter is: “In what ways can I drive my own professional growth and learning?” (p. xix), and an essential contribution of this chapter is the reminder that professional development does not have to be isolating nor expensive. Goldberg suggests learning from insiders and outsiders (pp. 92-102), she defines “insiders” as learning partners, coaches, mentors, and learners in our classrooms, and “outsiders” as blogs, workshops, publications, webinars, conferences, social media, unconferences, and edcamps. She also suggests making presentations and sharing experiences and knowledge so as to create professional and personal synergy, which will propel one's growth and enrich the profession.

Chapter six, “Take Care of Yourself,” deals with an important topic that is not necessarily discussed in teacher preparation programs or in schools among staff members, but that is essential for teachers' wellbeing and success. The guiding question for this chapter is: “How can I take care of my whole self, so I can show up healthy and ready to teach each day?” (p. xix). When providing care to others, we are reminded that we need to care for ourselves first and then attend to them. Goldberg reminds us of the airplane example where in the case of an unlikely loss of pressure in the cabin, we should put our own oxygen mask on first before helping others. Teacher burnout and attrition is real, and taking care of oneself may be an important part of the solution.

Goldberg encourages readers to take time for themselves on a daily basis by doing something that is meaningful to them even if it is for only 10-minutes a day and to breathe intentionally with the goal of relaxing and clearing one's mind. She cites Laura Vanderkam (2012), who suggests we make self-nurturing practices central activities in the morning in order to have impactful and powerful days (Goldberg adds *evening times* for those who may not be morning people) (pp. 110-11). Goldberg

introduces the concept of fear of missing out (FOMO) as one element that may disrupt the practice of caring for oneself and provides steps to overcome it. She suggests: 1) setting boundaries; 2) reducing the use of electronics and social media and the number of extra/additional assignments one takes on, and 3) practicing the art of saying “no” when needed. An important point related to the latter is the idea of “honesty” and how when we agree to do more than we are capable of we are being dishonest with ourselves and others. This lack of honesty can lead to resentment and unhappiness (p. 106). Therefore, being mindful of how much one is agreeing to do at any given time, is paramount for one’s overall happiness and career success and longevity. Happiness and not taking oneself too seriously are important topics discussed in this chapter where Goldberg encourages the readers to frame their lives in a positive light through being aware of positive and negative self-talk, laughing at themselves more often, and learning from their mistakes. The chapter ends with a few suggestions on how to help students take care of themselves by modeling and sharing the practices presented in this chapter (e.g., create free time for themselves, limit the use of social media and electronics, and laugh more often) and by encouraging them to practice them outside of the classroom.

The final chapter in the book, **Chapter seven** on “Teach Bravely,” summarizes and connects the journey and experiences the reader has participated in while reading this book to the importance of being an authentic teacher by recapitulating a few main points. The question Goldberg encourages the reader to consider when reading chapter seven is the following: “How can I choose to teach like myself each day, and how can I encourage my colleagues to do the same” (p. xix). The chapter begins by stating three consequences for not teaching like oneself, namely: *the imposter syndrome* (perceiving oneself as inadequate to perform one’s job well despite

evidence that shows otherwise), *student discomfort* (when teachers are not being authentic) and *missing the mark* (when teachers’ make instructional decisions based on something other than the learners’ needs). As an antidote to said consequences, Goldberg encourages teachers 1) to be *courageous*, to stand up and defend one’s beliefs regarding what might be best for one’s learners; 2) to be *memorable*, to connect with learners, surprise them, and engage with them in exploring and learning; 3) to be *seen*, to know that not everyone will like what we do or believe in but to be brave to show what we are about, and 4) to be *accepting of ourselves as we are*, we are not perfect but we can learn from our low points and mistakes. We should encourage our colleagues and learners to do the same. The chapter concludes with a “thank you” note to the reader and the *Teach Like Yourself Manifesto* (p. 132) presented as a call to action and a reminder of the six main messages of this text: *begin with the why in mind, align teaching with beliefs, connect, develop professionally, take care of yourself, and be brave*.

Final Thoughts

In general, this text is very accessible and a good tool to reflect upon the role of a teacher and to begin conversations with and among pre- and in-service teachers and administrators. Of particular significance and usefulness are the reflective spaces peppered throughout the text and the guiding questions presented within the text and as part of the Book Study Guide included as an Appendix (pp. 135-8). All of these elements strengthen the practicality of this manuscript. As a faculty member in a teacher preparation program, I appreciate the author’s desire to empower teachers to believe in themselves and to realize that their current knowledge is not static but that it will continue to grow if they seek out professional connections, reflect, fail and try again, and remain true to who

they are.

Goldberg ends this text with an invitation to the reader:

Take a final few minutes as you finish this book to reflect on exactly what it means for you right now to teach like yourself and then please share it with me and the other teachers in the world who need to see it. (p. 133)

This message stresses two needs highlighted throughout the text: 1) the need for self-reflection and acceptance and 2) the need to be seen and share successes, challenges, and learning experiences with others so everyone can grow and learn together.

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