

Anna Morrow

Glendale High School

Springfield Public Schools

Inspired Teachers Inspire Teachers

When I was in third grade, my parents decided to move from Springfield, Missouri to Birmingham, Alabama. As a child, I was scared to leave my home, my friends, my family - but one of the hardest parts of this transition was leaving my favorite teacher. Mrs. Vaughan was personable and made me love learning; I wanted to be just like her. She even threw me a surprise going away party. I clearly remember her intentionality with her students. This being said, I was heartbroken to learn that, years later, she decided to resign from teaching. When sharing this decision on Facebook she wrote, "Our brightest stars are burning out." My third grade teacher was referring to the burnout that plagues many current teachers and is a problem that will influence teachers in the years to come. Students are inspired to become teachers because they have outstanding teachers. The best way to recruit students to become future teachers is to address the problems that educators are facing.

Teacher shortages stem from and contribute to burnout. My third grade teacher stated, "At that point, I was exhausted, broken, hurt, sad, and miserable....physically, mentally, and emotionally. Everything I loved about teaching had left me- that was a very scary feeling. I knew in my heart I had nothing left for those kids and so I chose to walk away." There is an abundance of teachers that feel this same way. A kindergarten teacher for over 15 years walked away from teaching because she had no way to discipline her own students. She says that, "as teachers we are to make it work, with say, 1 or 2 students who have huge behavioral issues - and violence issues - while being told they deserve to be there. But it is at the expense of the other 25 students

who are behaving. They cannot learn in such disruptive environments." Teachers feel that although they are the authority figure of their classroom, they have no real authority. Educators need to have reasonable freedoms to discipline disruptive behavior. Teacher burnout stems from problems like these. The first step to recruiting new teachers is to properly empower our existing teachers.

Teachers also believe that new curriculum and technology usage is damaging their ability to teach. Melissa Bowers, another teacher who resigned, stated, "Technology is wonderful -- nay, necessary -- for a plethora of things, but it's killing [curiosity, creativity, and communication skills]. And as a teacher, you don't just witness the death, you are expected to assist in the murder. Because of standardized expectations, you must incorporate more and more tech, even when all you want to do is take a hammer to anything with a screen." While there is a necessary balance, teachers need to teach their students in a variety of ways. Excessive curriculum mandates take away the artistry of teaching.

I wanted to be a teacher for a very long time because of the fact that I had so many wonderful teachers. I decided not to follow this dream because the burnout that I have seen overwhelms even the most outstanding teachers. By giving educators the freedom to reasonably discipline and creatively teach, we would lose fewer teachers to burnout.

I remember my best teachers. I will always remember Mrs. Vaughan and how I wrote my very first 'book' because of her encouragement. I will always remember Mr. Baker- the first 'tough' teacher I ever had. I will never forget the way his high expectations made me push myself higher. I will never forget my senior year with Mr. Penticuff. He showed me that a good teacher explains the why - and that I can truly learn difficult material. All of these teachers have some characteristics in common. These teachers pushed me, challenged me, used creative methods of

teaching and showed me that I am capable. All of these teachers cared about their relationship with me, as a student and as a person. By striving to keep teachers like these, students learn and are inspired by them - and the next generation of teachers will arise because of these experiences.