

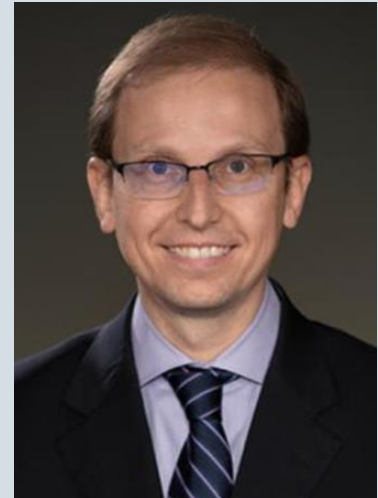
An Inspirational Message from Brian Link

2022 Burroughs Wellcome Fund North Central Region Teacher of the Year

'Tis the season...

If perchance, in-between dropping off single mittens to the lost and found, stocking up on tissues, reviewing for final exams, or taking care of your own holiday checklists, you actually found a moment to read this – a) good for you for carving out some time for yourself, and b) extend that moment, grab a hot beverage and allow me to share with you why I think December is the most wonderful time of year to be an educator.

To be clear, it has nothing to do with eight sets of Ferraro Rocher chocolates sitting in your faculty lounge, kids big and small donning sweaters that just spent the last 11 months covered in moth balls, or even the much needed and well deserved two weeks off for winter break.



Instead, it is the one time of year when the rest of the country remembers, at least for a bit, to do what we as educators strive to achieve every day: to see the world through a child's eyes and then to center our own efforts around making that world a better place for kids. When that happens, our communities, like our schools, become lighter, kinder, and gentler; more innocent and forgiving. All adults, in turn, become more like educators, full of joy, hope, and belief, even under some of the most trying circumstances.

For despite what you see in Hallmark movies, read in ads for Black Friday sales, or even hear over and over the radio, it doesn't require big gestures or gifts to make kids "eyes all aglow." It merely is a willingness to spend time with, be present for, and to listen to what's on their "wish lists." As I tell my kids everyday – learning is about the relationship. And relationships take effort, not perfection. The same is true for the adults in that relationship as well.

Being a teacher, and especially being a beginning teacher, is hard work – some might describe it as "saintly." It is hard work precisely because the profession asks you to give of yourself not just for a day, eight days, or a month but each and every day of the school year. Yet service to others is what gives life purpose and makes it meaningful. And the laughter and jolly we experience with our kids each day is what makes it sustainable.

Don't get me wrong, I'd love nothing more than to be able to spread the good tidings and cheer that there will be significant raises, better benefits, fully repaired, staffed, and supplied buildings, smaller class sizes, fewer meetings and paperwork, and kinder, more positive dialogue about educators and public education in the new year. And until that happens, I stand



in solidarity with each of you to voice the need for our communities, our adults, this season, to step up their giving and care for you, our caregivers.

But just as your students won't in ten years remember the score, they earned on the quiz you gave last week, you aren't likely to remember that conference that is currently making you grumpy or the email request that is causing you to roll your eyes. What you will recall, I hope, especially if you stay in the profession, is the joy of helping to make the dreams of many of your students, who are now all over the world, come true. Likewise, you'll cherish all the memories of friends and family you've made along the way who helped sustain you and your giving as well as helped to maintain and enhance our profession – the one that makes all others.

So as your colleague and a very appreciative father to a second grader attending a North Carolina public school, I thank each one of you for all that you give of yourselves on behalf of our students each and every day. And as soon as you can, close that laptop, get out of the building, and go and have the merriest of holiday seasons.

And while you're at it, since it's 'tis the season" ... Please check out [No Kid Hungry](#) – one of the sponsors of the North Carolina Teacher of the Year program. I can think of no better way to give back and serve our students while, at the same time, growing yourself as a professional than by lending your voice to the cause of helping ensure healthy school meals for all are provided on every North Carolina campus each and every day.

[NC Beginning Teacher Professional Development Corner](#)

In this month's BT PD Corner check out the helpful engagement resources in the [November ELA Newsletter](#) provided by the NCDPI ELA Consultants.

Also, prepare your classroom now for your return from holiday break with these [R.E.S.E.T. Tips](#) and [printables](#), provided by *The Average Teacher Blog*.



Most importantly, enjoy your holiday break; you've earned it!