



HELLO,

a letter to teachers



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INTRODUCTION

Hello!

Teachers play a significant role in shaping the lives of their students, even beyond the four walls of the classroom. Teachers are responsible for imparting academic knowledge while also molding young minds to navigate life's challenges, and this letter to teachers is all about the profound impact they make on their students. I know personally just how significant teachers can be. I was a knucklehead at times growing up, but some important teachers in my life saw potential and encouraged me. That connection made all the difference.

We designed our leadership program for high school-age students with this relationship in mind. It helps students develop essential leadership skills that will benefit them throughout their lives. We've all struggled at times to reach students, and we want to provide the tools to help. We focus on a different theme every month over a five-part course that promotes positive character traits and encourages personal growth.

We call it the "HELLO" method, and each chapter of this guide is devoted to one aspect of the five-part leadership program:

- **Help.** We'll explore ways teachers can help their students grow beyond the classroom.
- **Encourage.** We'll examine some examples of how to effectively encourage struggling students.
- **Listen.** We'll look at some practices that can help cultivate active listening skills.
- **Learn.** Some lessons last long after graduation. We'll discuss ways teachers can help instill a lifelong sense of curiosity.

Optimism. We'll share some success stories from teachers who helped inspire students to Go Win!

Thank you for taking the time to read this e-book and learn more about the HELLO method. While you're reading, think about what teachers have done for you and reach out to say "thank you."

Heady Coleman



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hello, hello, hello! I'm Heady Coleman. I wear many hats. Pastor, greeter, founder, husband, and dad, but I'm always wearing my red socks. I love to see every individual live out their greatest story. When people live out their greatest story, we have better communities and a better world. I'm a champion for individuals and communities. I get great joy from speaking to small and large audiences about what it means to "Go Win!"

Heady Coleman



ABOUT OUR SPONSOR - DR. MICHAEL CHANDLER

Dr. Michael Chandler is the Founder of Edmond Dental Center.

Dr. Chandler received his dental degree from the University of Oklahoma College of Dentistry in 2000. After graduation, he completed a general practice residency at the VA Medical Center in Oklahoma City.

Dr. Chandler was a member of the National Health Service Corp for three years where he served as Dental Director of Oklahoma City Community Center.

Dr. Chandler has maintained a private dental practice in Edmond for the last 20 years.

EdmondDentalCenter.com



CHAPTER 1: HELP

Connecting with students doesn't end with the class bell. The influence a teacher can leave on a student in even a short time extends beyond the classroom, and that's why the HELLO method starts with helping students first and foremost. We focus on the importance of teaching students about the benefits of helping others in their communities and the impact it can have on their well-being. There are many ways to help students connect outside of the classroom. In this chapter, I want to explore several commonly available opportunities.

MENTORING

Mentoring is a crucial aspect of any teacher's job. Teachers help their students develop confidence, motivation, and a positive attitude toward life by acting as a mentor.

Teachers can mentor in various ways, such as one-on-one, group sessions, or by providing online resources and support. Students have a lot going on, and mentoring them can help them identify their strengths and weaknesses and build their confidence in celebrating their wins.

Mentoring students in a small group or one-on-one setting also allows you to explore the student's motivations. What drives them? Exploring those motivations enables you to help students make important decisions, such as choosing a career path or deciding on further education.

PROVIDING EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

We all know the support teachers provide goes beyond math lessons. Emotional support is a kindness that can last forever. Research shows that a strong social and emotional learning approach is key to student success.

This support is crucial for students dealing with personal issues such as family problems, mental health concerns, or academic stress. Teachers help their students feel secure and valued by providing a safe and supportive environment.

Teachers can also help their students develop emotional intelligence by teaching them coping strategies, communication skills, and empathy. These skills can help students to build better relationships with their peers,

family, and colleagues. By providing emotional support, teachers can help their students develop resilience and overcome the challenges they face in life.

Mentorship and emotional support often go together, and the proper support from a teacher can make all the difference. That was certainly the case for English teacher Ms. Garcia, a mentor who went above and beyond to help a student struggling with anxiety and a fear of public speaking.

The student, Carmen, found it difficult to focus in class and struggled to participate in group activities. Ms. Garcia took the time to talk to Carmen after class and found out that speaking in front of others made the shy and introverted girl extremely uncomfortable.

Ms. Garcia knew overcoming this fear would be an important milestone for Carmen, so she stepped up to help. She spent the next several weeks mentoring Carmen one-on-one after school and researched public speaking tips to help the student calm her nerves, make eye contact with the audience, and project her voice.

Carmen's confidence began to grow. She started to participate more in class discussions and even volunteered to present in front of the class. While she was still nervous, she was able to deliver a confident and well-prepared presentation and received positive feedback from her classmates and teacher.

Beyond the classroom, Ms. Garcia provided Carmen with additional resources to help her manage her anxiety, such as meditation techniques and information about support groups. She also encouraged Carmen to seek out counseling services if she needed additional support.

Ms. Garcia's dedication and support showed Carmen that she was valued and cared for beyond just being a student in her class, which positively impacted Carmen's overall well-being both inside and outside of the classroom.



FOSTERING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Helping students get involved with their local communities is another super-duper way to help impact their lives beyond the classroom. By encouraging community involvement, you can help students develop a sense of social responsibility and empathy. This involvement can be organizing community service projects, participating in volunteering opportunities, or encouraging students to attend local events.

Fostering community involvement helps students develop a sense of belonging and purpose. It can also help them to develop essential life skills such as leadership, teamwork, and communication abilities. Involvement in the community can also provide students with opportunities to develop new interests and hobbies, expanding their horizons and helping them to become well-rounded individuals. However you choose to connect with students outside of the classroom, meeting them on their level and offering help is crucial.



CHAPTER 2: ENCOURAGE

Beyond imparting knowledge, teachers possess the remarkable ability to encourage and uplift students, fostering an environment that nurtures growth and resilience. It's one of the most powerful tools available to teachers, and it can help to develop a culture of positive encouragement that lasts beyond any individual moment. In this chapter, I focus on the power of encouragement.

There's no single way to encourage students. Teachers know best what works for their students. But plenty of simple ways to show encouragement in a classroom setting exist.

Showing encouragement looks like:

- **Providing Praise.** Provide verbal praise when students progress. Affirmations are vital to help students feel like they are moving forward.
- **Use Nonverbal.** Include nonverbal gestures with praise. Just like no two students learn the same, not every student processes encouragement exactly the same. One student may benefit from words of affirmation, while another gets more from a fist bump.
- **Be Tangible.** Offer tangible forms of encouragement. Stickers or gold stars work well for younger students or certificates of achievement for older students. Don't forget that everyone loves a smiley face or "great job" written on their assignment.
- **Praise Small Things.** Students are used to being praised when they reach milestones, but often it's the months beforehand when they need the most support. Praise a student's steps toward success, even if they might seem small.
- **Offer Support.** Offer support through struggle. Encouragement comes easy when students excel, but supporting students as they work through setbacks is critical.

Here are a few situations I'm aware of where encouragement helped students overcome their personal hurdles.

UNLEASHING HIDDEN POTENTIAL

Emily was a quiet and introverted student who often doubted her abilities. Mr. Thompson, her English teacher, recognized her untapped potential and deliberately encouraged her. He praised her creativity, consistently offering positive feedback on her writing assignments.

Emily began to believe in herself, slowly gaining confidence. With Mr. Thompson's encouragement, she joined the school newspaper and discovered her passion for storytelling. Today, Emily is a successful journalist, crediting her accomplishments to her teacher's unwavering support.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

David found mathematics an insurmountable hurdle, but his math teacher Mrs. Rodriguez refused to let him succumb to self-doubt. She provided extra support during lunch breaks, patiently guiding him through complex concepts in a low-pressure setting where he could freely ask questions.

When David made progress, no matter how small, Mrs. Rodriguez celebrated his achievements. Encouraged by her belief in his capabilities, David's attitude shifted, and he embraced the challenge. He went on to excel in math, eventually pursuing a degree in engineering. Mrs. Rodriguez's unwavering encouragement was the catalyst that transformed David's academic trajectory.



CULTIVATING A LOVE FOR LEARNING

Sarah, an elementary school student, was easily discouraged by difficult tasks. Mrs. Johnson, her science teacher, recognized an opportunity to encourage Sarah to overcome a challenge and reframe her mindset. She worked individually with Sarah to foster a growth mindset.

Instead of labeling mistakes as failures, Mrs. Johnson reframed them as opportunities for learning. When Sarah struggled with a science experiment, Mrs. Johnson encouraged her to persevere and guided her through the process. By acknowledging Sarah's efforts and emphasizing the value of curiosity and exploration, Mrs. Johnson instilled a love for learning in her students. Inspired by her teacher's encouragement, Sarah developed a genuine enthusiasm for science, which she carries with her to this day.

These stories demonstrate how teachers possess the remarkable ability to inspire and encourage their students, and I know there are a lot more of these stories out there. These teachers' genuine support creates an environment where students feel empowered to embrace challenges, explore their potential, and develop a lifelong love for learning. These exceptional educators recognized that a few words of encouragement can have a lasting impact on a student's self-belief, academic achievements, and overall well-being.

CHAPTER 3: LISTEN

It's easy to forget the power of actively listening. I know I do from time-to-time. We're bombarded with messages, updates, and paperwork. It's challenging to pay attention!

So many things pulling at our attention is why active listening is a necessary tool for teachers to focus on. In this chapter, I explore ways teachers can help students genuinely listen to each other, communicate effectively, adapt to different communication styles, and build strong relationships. As a teacher, you can provide ample opportunities for students to practice active listening.

Here's what active listening looks like in practice and what we hope to instill in students inside and outside of the classroom:

- Let the speaker finish talking without interrupting
- Respond with nonverbal cues, like shaking your head in affirmation, to show you're listening. Ask questions if needed to understand
- Listening to understand, not to respond

In the classroom, encouraging active listening among students helps improve their communication skills and understanding of the academic material and helps them develop empathy.

Teachers spend most of their time talking, but sometimes listening is much more important. Take, for example, Mr. Thompson, an English teacher with an unwavering dedication to his students' growth.

Every Friday, Mr. Thompson would introduce a thought-provoking discussion and encourage his students to express their opinions freely. He didn't stop there. Mr. Thompson actively moderated the conversations, ensuring each student had an opportunity to speak and be heard and listened to by the other students.

One day, tensions ran high during a debate on a controversial social issue. Instead of shutting down conflicting voices, Mr. Thompson encouraged respectful dialogue. He encouraged his students to practice the art of active listening, ensuring they truly understood each other's perspectives before presenting counter arguments. Over

time, students in Mr. Thompson's class developed the ability to appreciate diverse viewpoints, fostering a more inclusive and empathetic classroom environment.

Teachers regularly navigate difficult situations with students. Incorporating the concept of active listening is a great way to help students to resolve conflict. It's also a meaningful way to help students understand a perspective different from their own, as history teacher Ms. Ramirez believed strongly. To that end, she organized a unique activity for her class to help her students become more informed global citizens.

Each student was assigned a historical figure and asked to research and present a speech from that person's perspective. By embodying these important people, the students were compelled to listen attentively to their peers' speeches, gaining insight into different beliefs, motivations, and struggles. Ms. Ramirez encouraged them to reflect on how history might have unfolded differently if people had actively listened and understood each other's viewpoints. This exercise improved the students' listening skills and instilled a profound sense of empathy and open-mindedness.

Mrs. Johnson took a unique approach to the same concept in her language arts class. She recognized that fostering active listening skills was vital for effective communication, so she introduced a distinctive way to develop

this skill through language immersion. She divided students into pairs, giving each pair a scenario in which they had to communicate using a language they were unfamiliar with.

By actively observing their partner's non-verbal cues, tone, and expressions, students learned to decipher meaning even without understanding the words. This exercise highlighted the importance of listening beyond literal translations and encouraged students to pick up on subtle nuances in conversation, enhancing their ability to empathize with others who may speak different languages or come from different cultures.

We know that the impact of teachers extends beyond the classroom, and one of their most significant contributions is shaping students into active listeners who value understanding different perspectives. Through the examples of Mr. Thompson, Ms. Ramirez, and Mrs. Johnson, we see how teachers can employ innovative strategies to nurture active listening skills and foster empathy among their students.

Children learn by example, and by modeling and encouraging respectful dialogue, facilitating discussions, organizing immersive activities, and promoting language immersion, teachers play a vital role in cultivating a generation of individuals who can appreciate diverse viewpoints, engage in meaningful conversations, and embrace empathy.

CHAPTER 4: LEARN

In today's rapidly changing world, the importance of becoming a lifelong learner can't be overstated. I know I'm trying to learn new things every day. As technological advancements reshape industries and information becomes more accessible than ever before, the ability to adapt, grow, and continuously learn is essential for success.

Teachers play a vital role in instilling the value of education in students, guiding them toward setting goals and developing a growth mindset. In this chapter, I'll examine the benefits of this mindset and explore the power of these concepts through real-life stories of teachers I've heard about who successfully inspired their students to embrace lifelong learning.

One of the keys to developing into a lifelong learner is to embrace a growth mindset. Students should never learn that something is beyond their reach. Instead, they should be encouraged to learn from mistakes and see them as steps toward success rather than failures.

Actively encouraging a growth mindset improves student learning. It looks like:

- **Avoiding the Failure Label.** Mistakes are not failures. Encourage students to see that making mistakes is part of the learning process. No one has ever learned something valuable without making mistakes along the way.
- **Viewing Challenges as Opportunities.** Help to reframe challenges for students as opportunities to overcome something difficult, knowing they have guidance from you.
- **Praise the Process.** Don't just call out major achievements. Every step toward success is worth celebrating.
- **Reflect.** Provide opportunities for self-evaluation. Give students time to reflect on both their successes and shortcomings.
- **Model the Mindset.** Be honest with your students about something difficult you've worked to overcome. Share your struggles, not just your successes.

Teachers who foster this mindset in their classroom set students up for success in tackling challenges that arise outside of school. Academics are not the only place where students will have to face and overcome adversity. Science teacher Mr. Anderson shared with his class the famous Thomas Edison quote made while trying to invent what would become the first lightbulb: "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." By celebrating the process of learning and perseverance, Mr. Anderson inspired his students to tackle challenges head-on and embrace the journey of continuous improvement.

Ms. Chen, an innovative language arts teacher, also recognized the importance of setting goals to fuel lifelong learning. She introduced her students to SMART goals, which are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound. Each student was encouraged to set personal reading and writing goals, such as reading a certain number of books within a semester or writing a short story by a specific deadline. As they worked toward their goals, Ms. Chen provided regular feedback and celebrated their progress, creating a sense of accomplishment and motivating them to reach even higher.

SMART goals are a great tool for helping students to chart their own path to success, step-by-step.

SMART goals are:

- **Specific.** Be as specific as possible about the goal. You're much more likely to achieve it if it's well-defined instead of vague.
- **Measurable.** How will you measure success? How will you know when you've accomplished it?
- **Attainable.** It's important to be optimistic about your goal, but it's equally important to set reasonable goals.
- **Relevant.** Your goal should help you in some way, whether that's academic or personal.
- **Time-bound.** A defined time to check back on your progress.



Ms. Chen would then review her students' goals with them, helping them consider their action plans regularly and identify and overcome any obstacles.

Here's an example of the principle of life-long learning in action. Coach Johnson, a dynamic physical education teacher who believed that lifelong learning extended beyond the confines of traditional academics, organized a "Fitness Challenge" where students set fitness goals tailored to their abilities and interests.

Whether improving their running endurance or mastering a new sport, each student had a unique goal to work toward. Coach Johnson provided guidance throughout the semester, monitored progress, and celebrated achievements. By emphasizing the importance of physical health and personal growth, he inspired his students to adopt a holistic approach to lifelong learning.

Coach Johnson's innovative approach helped encourage students in an area traditionally challenging for many. Mrs. Rodriguez did the same for her math class, understanding that many students struggled with the subject due to a fixed mindset. She designed her lessons to promote a growth mindset by focusing on effort and strategy rather than innate ability.

One technique she employed was encouraging students to reflect on their learning journey by keeping a journal. They wrote about their problem-solving approaches, identified areas for improvement, and celebrated small victories along the way. Mrs. Rodriguez's nurturing approach helped her students embrace the idea that they could develop intelligence through dedication and perseverance.

These stories of dedicated instructors exemplify how teachers can effectively instill the importance of lifelong learning in their students. By incorporating goal-setting strategies and nurturing a growth mindset, these educators empowered their students to embrace challenges, persist through obstacles, and view learning as a lifelong journey. As we continue to navigate a rapidly changing world, let's remember the profound impact teachers can have on shaping the minds of future generations, helping them become enthusiastic, self-directed learners prepared for the ever-evolving landscape of the future. Yes, it's a substantial calling, but I know we're up to the challenge.

CHAPTER 5: OPTIMISM

Beyond imparting academic knowledge, great teachers possess the power to instill optimism in their students. By fostering a positive outlook, educators can inspire their pupils to overcome challenges, believe in their potential, and strive for greatness.

That's easier said than done, but there are some proven ways to help hone the power of optimism for students. In this chapter, I'll tell you some remarkable stories about how teachers have impacted students, empowering them with optimism and setting them on a path toward success.

Let's start with Mrs. Anderson, a third-grade teacher in a small town. Her student, Emily, struggled with low self-esteem due to her learning difficulties. But where others might focus on her weaknesses, Mrs. Anderson nurtured her strengths. With endless patience and encouragement, she taught Emily to embrace her unique abilities, helping her build resilience and a sense of optimism. Today, Emily is a successful writer, and she attributes her achievements to Mrs. Anderson's unwavering belief in her potential.

Jake, a high school student passionate about mathematics, likewise credits his success to a teacher who encouraged him to believe in what seemed like an impossible dream. Jake faced financial hardships that made pursuing higher education seem out of reach. But his math teacher, Mr. Patel, recognized Jake's exceptional talent and determination. The instructor tirelessly searched for scholarships, advocated on Jake's behalf, and connected him with mentors in the field. Jake's spirits lifted, and his optimism soared. Thanks to Mr. Patel's guidance, Jake secured a full scholarship to a prestigious university, becoming the first person in his family to attend college.

Emily and Jake's stories demonstrate the power of optimism shared, and research backs it up. Anything is possible when an adult offers encouragement and support for a child's dreams rather than shutting them down. It's our job to inspire these youth, not stifle them.

Shy and reserved, Lily struggled to find her voice in a crowded classroom filled with energetic kindergarteners. Ms. Johnson, her compassionate teacher, took notice of Lily's apprehension and introduced a daily affirmation routine. Each morning, the students would share positive statements about themselves, reinforcing self-belief and optimism. Over time, Lily's confidence blossomed, and she began actively participating in class. Ms. Johnson's dedication to fostering a positive environment enabled Lily to overcome her fears and embrace her true potential.

Teachers have a remarkable capacity to impact students' lives in profound ways. By fostering optimism, we can choose to empower students to overcome challenges, dream big, and reach their full potential. The stories above serve as powerful reminders of that transformative power.

CONCLUSION

Teaching is challenging, and there are always students that we don't know if we can reach. But with the HELLO method, I can see reminders of the most impactful teachers in my life, and I know how much that meant to a knucklehead like me. Teachers shaped all our lives, and they deserve our gratitude as they help shape the next generation!

Learn more about the HELLO method.

