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# Foreword

**I**magine yourself in a comfortable and casual setting. You listen in to a conversation and realize you are mesmerized by the talk. These authors clearly know the world you occupy, and you are captivated by the clarity, insight, and knowledge they display. But wait. Something is amiss. These men and women come from separate disciplines, some you normally wouldn't attempt to read, much less try to understand. But here they are, speaking matter-of-factly and down-to-earth with Bill and Ochan Powell providing glue and applications to their work with authentic, compelling, and sometimes humorous stories about school.

Drawing on vast research and years of personal experience, the Powells convey through vibrant school examples, appealing human vignettes, and illustrative classroom narratives that how teachers respond to stress, what teachers profess as their beliefs, how teachers adapt to classroom diversity, and how teachers process learning in their own style has a profound effect on student learning. The authors' vivid, personal, and intimate writing style brings us into classrooms, staff meetings, and parent conferences, and like a welcome but invisible observer, we interact with the personalities of numerous teachers, students, parents, and administrators as they deal with the complexities of school life. Magically, breaking through the usual fragmentation and academic language, the Powells create a practical book for every teacher and every person who works with teachers. Listen with them as they blend teaching implications with research from such fields as education, social psychology, anthropology, sociology, and neuroscience.

Meet Carmen, Matthias, Irshad, Melvin, Grace, Marina, Nishad, Pauline, and Stefano and other multinational students in stories of authentic challenges and celebrations teachers face. You'll get to know and feel like you're sitting beside Malcom Rigby during a grade-level meeting, observing in the classroom of Miss Elizabeth Crawley, or entering the case study of a student named Jonathan. These personalized, charming vignettes make the text come alive to help you understand the realities of school dynamics.

The authors of this book are not only educators, long practiced in our profession, but are accomplished authors. They write with compassion and have the ability to enter the world of students, teachers, and support personnel. They understand their insecurities, passions, and worries. They practice emotional, contextual, and cognitive empathy providing not simple answers but authentic responses to complex interactions. Each page has a sense of immediacy; the prose is tight and quick. The headings, such as “Pygmalion on Her First Date,” “Let Them Learn Chinese!” “The Marshmallow Challenge,” “Margaret: The Loose Cannon,” “If Teaching Involves Acting, What Does the Audience Think?” and others, invite curiosity and draw us into the fascinating world of the schoolhouse.

For teachers, this book provides validation for the school and classroom situations in which they find themselves. As teachers learn more about themselves and understand personal stressors, this book provides practical suggestions for ways to respond. This tidy compendium of wisdom brings special gifts. First, the book validates all shades of teaching experiences without judgment. Next, it provides research-based answers to why teachers react and feel as they do in challenging situations. It offers not only practical tips borne of the authors’ experience but activities that enhance their capacities for emotionally intelligent teaching. Finally, this extraordinary book enhances teachers’ capacity for self-management, self-monitoring, and self-modification toward their own gain and the learning of students.

What do students learn that is not explicitly taught? While curriculum committees labor to map the curriculum, compose essential questions, decide on what’s most worth knowing, clarify academic outcomes, and formulate assessment rubrics, we must also remember that children’s most enduring learning may not be found in standards, benchmarks, and exit exams. Their most essential and lifelong learning stems from the display of their teacher’s level of emotional maturity in the moment-to-moment response to the twists and turns of daily classroom life.

Students learn best through imitation of significant others. Research with mirror neurons suggests that imitation and emulation are the most basic forms of learning. Teachers, parents, and administrators realize the importance of their own modeling of desirable habits in the presence of learners. In the day-to-day events and when problems arise in schools, classrooms, and homes, children must see the significant adults employing positive, rational, thoughtful, trusting behaviors. Without this consistency, there will be a credibility gap that, in turn, produces stress that distracts from and even negates deep learning. As Ralph Waldo Emerson is quoted as saying, “What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say.”

Since most student learning is “caught, not taught,” the purpose of this book is to enhance teacher congruity in working with students. It encourages authentic and rational responses to situations, which in turn, allows students to respond with authenticity to the complex situations that they will encounter throughout their lifetimes.

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