



THE TEACHING PRESENCE

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Increasing numbers of conflict resolution educators are taking on the challenge of integrating "emotional intelligence" as a key aspect in the classroom and throughout school life. Expressing feelings is central to this work, whether teachers focus on conflict resolution skills or the broader range of attitudes, values and skills fostered by a comprehensive approach to social and emotional learning. For students to talk honestly about conflicts and issues of diversity, what are the skills and qualities that allow teachers to safely invite students to open their hearts in the classroom? Certainly they need to be trained in new methods as well as understanding the curriculum and its theoretical framework. But beyond methods and theory, a more elusive quality profoundly affect the learning that is possible --the teacher's own way of being with students.

"We teach who we are."

"Walk your talk."

Or, as Emerson put it, "What you are speaks so loudly that I can't hear what you say you are."

The messages our students receive from our modeling are even more potent when we are teaching basic life skills such as effective communication, relationship-building and handling personal and social problems. Integrating conflict resolution education into their classrooms can be done quite mechanically or it can be offered with a kind of "presence" that carries the class to a place where hearts are moved and genuine connections occur. We celebrate these precious moments and admire teachers who live there most of the time. But how do we guide ourselves and other teachers to that place? What qualities of teaching or being do we develop to discover this "teaching presence"? And what practices can be used to cultivate such qualities?

I have wrestled with this question of the "teaching presence" over the last fifteen years as I have worked with thousands of adolescents and trained hundreds of teachers. As I witnessed myself and others feel "on" one day and "off" the next, I felt called to find words to describe this elusive state and to guide teachers to discover and strengthen this aspect of their work.

Not Presence

Ironically, the words first came when I observed a class in which the methods were in place but the teaching presence was nowhere to be found. I had to watch a teacher going through the motions, using exercises designed for educating the heart--but with the spirit of this work utterly lost.

This class has no beginning. It just starts. There is no gathering of the energies, the moods, the personalities. He makes no attempt to look at each child, even in the process of taking roll. There is no effort to connect, to see who is really there today.

The circle is awry. Two boys on each end are sitting outside the circle and two gaping holes are next to the teacher, re-creating the usual separation of teacher and student. He makes no attempt to shepherd them, to pull them in with either warmth or a firm insistence that everyone be a part of the circle.

The children rock raucously at their desks-- their energy not contained and therefore threatens to spill, fall, topple over, and cause harm. There is no call to stillness from the teacher. Students interrupt frequently, and one boy gets up and moves around. Side conversations erupt. And still there is no call to focus, to respect for those speaking-- and no call to a sense of purpose.

He begins the exercise -- hesitantly, mechanically. It is an exercise about limits, about experiencing what it feels like to reach one's limit and be pushed beyond it. The group is asked to listen to a number sequence and then write it down. Each time, the sequence is longer until it goes beyond the capacity of memory.

When the teacher asks them why he had done the exercise, one boy says, "Because it's good for us to concentrate, to challenge our minds. Kids need to be quiet sometimes and concentrate."

It was not the answer he was looking for, so he doesn't notice the wisdom in the boy's words. Here is an opportunity to acknowledge and build on the wisdom of a child and to teach a lesson about stillness, focus, and about the shift in the atmosphere of the room and how good it felt. It is an opportunity to recognize a call from this child for guidance to that stillness.

But it is not the answer he was looking for, so it goes by. And throughout, I notice this teacher is not open to the moment, not willing to work with the surprises and wisdom that come up, and validate a child for his or her gifts.

As the class unfolds, I begin to realize that this teacher, who was hired at the last moment to cover an unexpected new section, is missing the three qualities I have come to see as central to "the teaching presence": presence, an open heart and caring discipline.

Not able to be present in the moment, this teacher can't really see what is going on. Several children never say a word, and the teacher does nothing to bring them in. One boy sitting outside of the circle raises his hand repeatedly

for long periods, and the teacher never notices him. At one point the class comes alive when a boy begs for second or third time to read a story he had written. As he reads, the group is fascinated, fully engaged. Now he goes on to tell the true story in his life that inspired him. Another boy echoes a similar story.

At this moment of personal engagement, a teacher who is fully present will acknowledge and affirm what is happening and suggest that the class build on this process. But this teacher fails to notice this opportunity and calls for a break. The momentum is lost.

A closed heart in the classroom is difficult to describe but easy to feel. It contributes to the difficulty in being present. It is a tone, a deadness in the voice, a mechanical quality of going through the motions -- asking questions, getting answers, without ever really hearing the answers, let alone what is being said between the lines.

A closed heart may come across as a lack of warmth and an inability to see and acknowledge moments of strength, wisdom or pain when children speak. The teacher appears more concerned with whether or not she is doing the "right thing" than with how the children are feeling and how she feels about the children.

After the break, several children come back quite late with bags of candy, and for the next 20 minutes, three of them sit together directly across from the teacher dropping candies in their colas, watching them fizzle and giggling together. The teacher ignores them and continues to ask other children to speak, which they do. Once he tries to discipline a boy by asking him mildly, "Do you think you could take that cup out of here -- it's disturbing others." His unwillingness to discipline suggests to me a closed heart. If he truly felt and respected the vulnerability of the children speaking, he would never allow others to be so rude.

The gift that teacher gave me was a clear picture of what can happen when the lesson plan is more important than the teaching presence. We can have the best curricula available, train teachers in technique and theory, but our students will be unsafe and our programs hollow if we do not provide opportunities for teachers to develop their own social and emotional intelligence.

Even if students yearn for a curriculum which takes them into the territory of heart, community and soul, they are very sensitive to the qualities of their guide. In both my own work with students and in coaching teachers in the field of social and emotional learning, I have seen students are reluctant to "bare their souls" or open their hearts unless they feel their teachers are on the journey themselves. For teachers to cultivate the social, emotional and spiritual development of students--critical for well rounded conflict resolution education--they must simultaneously cultivate their own. If we are to have successful integration at the level of curriculum, the teacher's own efforts at personal integration are central.

Let us look now at three qualities -- discipline, presence and an open heart --

that define the "teaching presence" in the classroom.

Respectful Discipline

Respect is central in social and emotional learning; it is an end in itself, and a condition for allowing children to speak from the heart. Speaking from the heart is what makes a class come alive; it is what engages other children to want to listen. And when they listen to someone speaking from this depth and vulnerability, their own hearts open to that person and they feel compassion. What was respectful behavior becomes true respect for someone they may have previously disliked or dismissed.

If we want our classroom to be a place for students to share what is deeply meaningful to them, we must take responsibility for creating an environment that is safe. Only then will they respond with their heart and spirit and ask fundamental questions that might seem foolish. A teacher alone cannot create safe space -- it is a goal and a process that must be shared by the whole group. But the teacher is the guide for how a safe place is created for the human heart and the shepherd who protects when danger appears. For students and teachers to bring their full humanity into a school environment, safety must be established. Respectful discipline is an essential tool in creating this safety.

What is this quality of discipline that comes so naturally to some teachers and continues to elude others? Effective discipline includes:

clarity of purpose,
a positive image of what discipline means,
inner strength to be able to risk being disliked,
an understanding and willingness to use one's whole person in an expression of personal power.

Clarity of purpose.

Each teacher must find his own words to convey simply and clearly the purpose of exploring the social and emotional realm in school. Then the teacher can create a partnership with his or her students to establish the conditions for safety that will allow authentic dialogue to unfold. "What are the conditions or agreements you need for talking about your feelings and social dilemmas?" I ask early in the semester. Together we make a list, which looks remarkable similar from class to class and from year to year.

- no interruptions
- no put-downs or bagging
- no judging
- respect
- honesty
- the right to be silent
- honor the privacy of what is spoken

I remind my students that only when each of us honors these ground rules

can our classroom become a safe place. While I can't ensure this alone, I will do all that I can to protect the sanctity of this agreement.

For me, it was crucial to see that my primary responsibility is to the group, not to individuals. This by no means implies an indifference to individuals -- what makes the group work is the genuine caring we feel for each person. But when an individual is sabotaging the group effort, then the priority must be to protect the group, which indirectly benefits that individual as well. The child who is disruptive is calling out for limits on his or her destructive power.

A positive image of discipline. Many of us came to adulthood and teaching in an era in which discipline was a dirty word. Its connotations were authoritarian, repressive and punitive. The word discipline conjured up a picture of someone with power using it to diminish or humiliate someone without it.

"Tell us a story about an experience from your children that is evoked by the word "discipline?" I ask the teachers in my workshop. Some stories are inspiring. Others disturb us deeply.

I was in first grade and my little friend Saul kept squirming and speaking out of turn, interrupting like he always did. Well, it was the final straw. Our teacher grabbed the masking tape from her desk and taped his mouth shut. We were all stone silent. She didn't stop with his mouth. She just kept winding that tape around and around his face and body until she had mummified this little child. I have never been so afraid."

The dark side of discipline reveals much to us about what we often react against. Many teachers are drawn to social and emotional learning because they have a strong desire to empower children and to foster the natural blossoming of an inherently good seed. They experience a contradiction between their image of discipline and their image of nourishing and empowering children. How can they "draw out" what is inherent in the child (the original meaning of the word educate) with disciplinary behavior they assume will be repressive? Confronted with the need for discipline in an exceptionally rambunctious class of fourteen-year-olds, one teacher kept insisting to me that he didn't want to become a "drill sergeant." Frank had two images: the nice guy and the drill sergeant. Neither his heart nor his mind could offer him an image of discipline that provided love, safety, and empowerment.

My own views of discipline began to change in the late 1970's when I was working with teenage mothers. The director of the program for their toddlers shared some wisdom that came from 40 years of experience with children. "Children do not always know yet what is safe for them or others," Dorothy said to the young mothers. "Discipline and limits are a way that we create a circle of safety for those not yet ready to do this for themselves. Picture these limits as a big hug -- our strong arms encircling the child with comfort and safety."

Dorothy offered me an alternative to the image of discipline which intimidates

or violates children in the name of order and authority. At the root of such abusive discipline is a confusion which Brendtro and Long have untangled: "To believe that one can teach respect through coercion is to confuse respect with obedience."

Once we see discipline as an act of love and containment, we can be creative and responsive to the style and degree of discipline needed with a particular child or group. I encourage teachers to seek their own metaphors to help them discover a positive outlook on discipline. When teachers distinguish respect from fear, and provide limits from a desire to protect, we are not defending our power as teacher. We are helping group members create the safety to be vulnerable and authentic with one another.

Although we know that these limits are coming from love, the student who is disciplined may not perceive it this way. Whether we have expressed a firm call to silence, a refusal to tolerate put-downs, or as a last resort, a directive to leave the room, the child may feel caught, shamed or sometimes picked on. He or she may be angry and hurt, tell us we are being unfair or mean, or just give us a wounded look. This can be devastating to a teacher who wants to be a model of loving kindness. That student may dislike us for a day, a month or forever. And others in the group may be frightened by the sternness in our voice and dislike us as well.

Because of the interactive style of teaching in conflict resolution education and social and emotional learning, students have more opportunities to be disruptive than in a strictly didactic classroom. And because our goal is to encourage open expression, playfulness and independent thinking, students may push the limits in the early weeks, trying to get their teacher to define the parameters of their new freedom. Particularly during this time, a teacher must have enough inner strength to risk being disliked in service of success for the group.

Inner strength and self worth

Many of us attracted to this work have wrestled with the tendency to care for others more than we care for ourselves. We may tolerate transgressions of our own limits to be loving to another. But when teachers are supported through coaching to become more empowered to identify their own needs and boundaries, they can truly discipline from the heart. Then students can learn from our modeling that we can help and love people without submerging or violating our own needs.

Personal power: the whole person. Finally, teachers can be supported to learn the full range of their personal power to command respect. Becoming conscious of our movement, humor, voice, eyes and emotional expression, our whole selves can be an instrument which conveys respectful discipline.

Appropriate display of negative emotion can be a crucial yet complex aspect of calling for respect and bringing students into focus. If a class is out of control, or just extremely unfocused, a teacher has many emotional responses: frustration, disappointment, hurt, and anger. If a teacher is mature

and self-aware, expressing one of these emotions in a controlled but powerful way can have a positive impact on a class.

Control is essential here. It is through choice, not loss of control, that a teacher can effectively and safely use negative emotions. The choice must be made deliberately and thoughtfully with the students' best interests in mind. When I am making the decision to show some vulnerability or anger to a class, I take time before class to center myself and to be sure that my heart is open and connected to each student in that room. To maintain this level of choice, teachers need safe professional outlets, such as supervision, staff meetings or peer support, to express and process their frustrations with their colleagues, not their students.

Knowing that their vulnerability will be respected and protected, both teacher and students can begin to open their hearts. They can begin to connect deeply with themselves and one another, and risk bringing their full humanity to the classroom.

An open heart

An open heart is a precondition to being fully present. A teacher with an open heart can be warm, alive, spontaneous, connected, compassionate. She can see the language of the body and hear the feelings between the words. An open heart is what allows a teacher to be trustworthy and to help build trust in the group.

To have an open heart, a teacher must be willing to be vulnerable and willing to care.

Vulnerability

To be vulnerable is to be willing to feel deeply, to be moved by what a student expressed or by what comes up inside ourselves in the presence of our students or the issues they raise. According to the dictionary, vulnerable means "susceptible to injury, insufficiently defended." It comes from the Latin to wound. It implies danger and risk. This potential for wounding is a clue to the challenge of teaching with an open heart.

Choosing to be vulnerable in public, in one's work life, is a decision that many people do not make. It has, in fact, been one of the key distinctions between public and private life. At home, we express a broad range of feelings and engage deeply with others; at work, we are more likely to play a role or wear a mask that hides anything that could be construed as weak or negative. In the movement towards social and emotional learning in both schools and in the workplace -- this distinction softens so students and teachers alike can express themselves more fully. Expanding the notion of "home" to the classroom and the school, educators create meaningful or "authentic" community, where it is safe to bring in more and more of our whole selves.

Leading our students to express their emotions and respond fully to others, we are more effective and trustworthy if we are a part of the group ourselves rather than placing ourselves apart from, or above that circle of genuine feeling. But vulnerability is not to be confused with a failure to set boundaries. Indeed, it is often not until a teacher has developed such boundaries that he can afford to be truly vulnerable with his students without losing his own center.

But even teachers who have learned to be vulnerable with young people may go through periods when it is difficult to do so. When we are emotionally raw, when something is going on inside or outside that is painful or confusing, we need our walls to protect us and to protect others from our volatile impulses. Since we all have such days, or weeks or months, it is useful to explore how we can keep our hearts open in the face of overwhelming stress or depression.

First, we acknowledge it to ourselves. Just allowing ourselves to become conscious about our defenses helps keep the heart open to others. Meditation or reflection time can help teachers scan their hearts to see, acknowledge, and sometimes heal current troubling feelings.

Second, we can acknowledge this pain to others -- to unload, process, and heal. But it is precisely at these times that we don't share such issues with students. So a teacher must have resources -- a friend, colleague, therapist or supervisor -- and must be willing to use these resources. Creating a regular opportunity when teachers can choose to share personally has been an important feature of my work in social and emotional learning. Through regular group supervision meetings, we can build into school a safe container for teachers' feelings. Such support for maintaining an open heart is particularly important because exposing ourselves to the volatile emotions of children or adolescents can stir some of our own deepest issues.

Willingness to care

What does it mean for a teacher to be willing to care deeply about his or her students? I believe that teachers cannot really develop the "teaching presence" without being willing and able to love. Knowing the limitations to perspective, skill or self-mastery in the young, a loving teacher feels deep respect for the essential humanity -- the depth of feeling and capacity for wisdom -- in even the smallest child.

I once had a conversation with an elderly relative who declared that some people are interesting and others have nothing to say. I tried to speak respectfully but felt passionately opposed. "In my work, I found that any person who feels safe enough to speak from the heart is interesting to listen to. So many times I have been surprised when an apparently superficial, rebellious or dull young person was moved by love and respect to speak with a tenderness, depth, and wisdom that moved me to even greater love."

So how do teachers develop this capacity to love? As a teacher, I had to work first to develop compassion and forgiveness for myself. Working with

teachers, I carefully build a set of experiences which invite them to feel their love for themselves and for one another.

A teacher's love is at the heart of effective discipline. An open heart, like vulnerability, should not be confused with a lack of boundaries. Love does not tolerate behavior that is abusive to anyone. But love does accept and forgive the child from whom this behavior springs.

The love and discipline I bring to my students is based on a belief that there is a core of goodness in each child. I believe there is an innate thrust toward creative growth in each person. If we connect to that core, if we can nourish, affirm and acknowledge it, the seed will grow and flourish into its unique potential.

Acknowledging the shadow

Built into this trust in our essential goodness is a willingness to acknowledge what Carl Jung called the "shadow" side of human nature. Qualities such as envy, greed, hatred, prejudice, lust, and even sadness and depression have been despised or disowned by many people who strive for "goodness." Even some of the positive thinking approaches common to some New Age or self-esteem programs deny the shadow altogether.

When we create a safe environment for young people to acknowledge what they have disowned, they begin to forgive themselves and each other and learn ways to contain and transform destructive emotions. Teachers who uncover what is in their own shadows become much safer guides for their students in the emotional and social realm. What we do not see in ourselves we are likely to project onto our students and colleagues through feelings of envy or disgust. Suppressed, the shadow will erupt in ways that are often out of our control. It will catch us from behind, grab us by the tail and swing us around until we lose our balance and perspective. We cannot really open our hearts, cannot really afford to love, if we remain afraid of the shadow in ourselves or in the young people we teach. Helping teachers work constructively with their own shadows is a crucial part of my approach to staff development for social and emotional learning.

Obstacles to caring

The first obstacle to caring is the fear of loss or rejection that can come with love. We may feel that if we care deeply, we give a person more power to hurt us. How much safer it seems to mute our willingness to care deeply!

Our attachment to ego can also be an obstacle to caring. When we are totally focused on following the curriculum and "doing it right," preoccupied with competence and success, we often forget to open our hearts to the young people. Particularly if they are "sabotaging" the "success" of the group, we may shut down. Coaching one new teacher, I simply had to say kindly that she appeared so concerned about doing a good job that she had forgotten to open her heart. Her instant recognition began the shift immediately.

Ego can also block our hearts when we are attached to a particular plan, technique or approach in the classroom. If we can keep our hearts open, we see the unique needs of our students and discover an entirely different way to reach our goals. This capacity to care deeply about our students and about our mission without being attached to a specific, "known" outcome is crucial to the art of being fully present.

Being present

"The present moment is one of power, of magic or miracle if we could ever be wholly in it and awake to it."

"The way to experience oneness is to realize that this very moment, this very point in your life, is always the occasion."

Being fully present is the very heart of "the teaching presence." A teacher is expressing this capacity when she is:

- open to perceiving what is happening right now,
- responsive to the needs of this moment,
- flexible enough to shift gears,
- prepared with the repertoire, creativity and imagination to invent a new approach in the moment.
- humble and honest enough to simply pause and acknowledge if a new approach has not yet arrived.

Being present can mean letting go of a particular approach. It may also mean letting go of the goal of that day's class. Is this goal more important than what is coming up in the moment? We must wrestle with this question, because the answer is always different. If we have developed our capacities for discipline, we will not change course just because students complain or get sidetracked. But sometimes our larger vision of the purpose of this class, which transcends the goal of a particular lesson plan, reveals an opportunity to learn better now what we might have planned for two months from now.

We were supposed to teach about anger management today, but Josh's grandfather just died. The whole class is moved by his grief. I see it is time to talk about death and mourning, a time when they are hungry to understand the way humans grieve and heal a great loss.

The term "the teachable moment" has been coined over the last decade to honor this capacity in teachers to be responsive to students when we see the bigger picture.

Being present also means the ability to see that when things are going "wrong" -- the air conditioning keeps breaking, or the group is always tired because this class is scheduled for the last period on Friday -- there may be an opportunity for these students to learn something about meeting a challenge that is unique to this group.

How can we be present if we come into class with a load of baggage --

preoccupied or exhausted by a conflict that occurred this morning? If we can find ways to clear our minds and hearts, to refresh our spirits, we can be fully present in class. Most of our issues -- a fight with a colleague, a personal family matter, a troubling dream -- are too private to be shared appropriately with our students. We neither want to risk ourselves nor risk using our students as our own support system. Particularly at a time when so many children are being enrolled to parent their own parents, children need adult role models who can care authentically and gracefully for their own needs without imposing them on children.

What are the ways that teachers can contain and express their own feelings before coming into class? What supports teachers in becoming fully "awake" so they are resilient, responsive and creative with their students?

Cultivating presence is both a psychological and a spiritual path. The psychological dimension involves creating some source of support for processing one's emotions and issues so that one can be more in charge of and more at peace with oneself. As I discussed in the section on keeping our hearts open, schools or departments that create programs in social and emotional learning can best sustain teachers by building in such emotional support through supervision or frequent faculty meetings which include personal councils. On a day-to-day level, teachers caught off guard by a sudden upset in the hours before teaching, can seek a friend or colleague with whom to share feelings so they don't spill into class.

The spiritual dimension is more elusive. Thich Nhat Hanh, poet, Zen master, and peace activist, describes the purpose of "nowness" in his book *Being Peace*.

We tend to be alive in the future, not now. We say, "Wait until I finish school and get my Ph.D. degree, and then I will be really alive." When we have it, and it's not easy to get, we say to ourselves, "I have to wait until I have a job in order to be really alive." And then after the job, a car. After the car, a house. We are not capable of being alive in the present moment. We tend to postpone being alive to the future, the distant future, we don't know when. Now is not the moment to be alive. We may never be alive at all in our entire life. Therefore, the technique, if we have to speak of a technique, is to be in the present moment, to be aware that we are here and now, and the only moment to be alive is the present moment.

This future orientation keeps many of us from experiencing the fullness of the present, the fullness of life. Dwelling on the past -- either idealizing it or obsessing about our wounds-- is also an obstacle to being present. Much of our traditional educational model and way of raising children is based on veneration of the past. But there are ways to greet the gifts of the past while remaining fully present.

Nowness, or the magic of the present moment, is what joins the wisdom of the past with the present. When you appreciate a painting or a piece of music or a work of literature, no matter when it was created, you appreciate it now. You experience the same nowness in which it was created. It is always now.

Becoming fully present is a priority for both student and teacher in my approach to social and emotional learning. In class, we begin with warm-up exercises designed to let go of the past and future long enough to have a direct, immediate experience of ourselves and each other. Many teachers expect students to be present when they arrive in class. In contrast, I believe it is my responsibility as a teacher is to help them come into the present so we can all learn together. Games wake them up; quiet reflection invites them to look inside and release distracting thoughts and feelings. Pairing or group sharing exercises allow students to express what may be preoccupying them so that it is easier to let it go. Later in the period, when we have created a safe enough classroom for students to "speak from the heart," such authentic expression is riveting, calling both speaker and listener into the now.

As a teacher, I find a daily meditation practice essential to cultivating presence. I not only sit quietly in the morning at home, but also try to take five or ten minutes before each class to take stock of what I am feeling and clear my mind. In those minutes before class --in an office, my car, even a closet in an empty classroom -- I imagine the class I am about to work with. I see myself looking into each pair of eyes, imagining my heart opening to each child. This will often remind me or help me sense some issue that is going on in the group or with an individual that needs to be addressed that day -- something I would not think of when I am doing my lesson plan in my usual waking state. I also take a few minutes to focus on deep breathing to clear my mind and oxygenate my brain, or do several minutes of "forced" yawning which refreshes my brain and allows me to be alert and receptive to my students. When I work with a partner, we take a moment together to become present and aligned with each other.

Other teachers have shared with me their own approaches to cultivating this quality of mind: running, hiking, playing a musical instrument, painting, writing poetry or keeping a daily journal are all processes that allow one to clear the mind. Most agree that discovering this quality of being is a spiritual experience. In those rare times when I have spent an entire day or several days in a state of being present, I have felt my strongest connection to my spirit and to the exquisite gift of life.

Conclusion

"In teaching...there is a secret hidden in plain sight," writes Parker Palmer, pioneer of "teacher formation" work. "Good teaching can never be reduced to technique --good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher. The quality of the work that is done...depends at least as much (and often more) on the inner qualities of the person doing it as it does on his or her technical skill." While this truth holds for any kind of teaching, it becomes central to the art of integrating a comprehensive approach to conflict resolution education into our classrooms.

Working with students at the heart level takes courage. Entering this arena -- particularly with adolescents -- can drop us into a cauldron of our own emotional and spiritual growth. Issues or wounds not yet examined by a

teacher will show up in neon in the mirror of adolescent search and struggle. If we are unwilling to honestly confront these personal issues, we can go numb or be rocked off our moorings. But the rewards are great for teachers who are willing to engage their own depths and meet the demons and the allies that dwell within.

Nourishing the hearts of students, our own souls are fed. We find renewal of our passion for teaching and a long term recipe for avoiding burnout. Bringing to the classroom an open mind, a heart full of love and a will strong enough to protect and guide their flock, teachers cultivate the personal atmosphere that invites students to safely explore the social, emotional and spiritual realms of life. In both their professional and personal lives, such teachers discover the rewards of tremendous insight and personal strength.