

# **Editorial: Extend grace, and greater resources, to teachers**

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Teaching is a calling, and not everyone is so called. For those not called to teach, the weeks and months from mid-March to May during the 2019-20 school year led to a new or deeper appreciation for our children's teachers.

Will greater appreciation translate to better resourcing for our educators? I hope so.

Many of us tried to maintain our children's education, feeling the relentless stress of it, though our jobs weren't dependent on how many of our children passed state testing. Likewise, the only complaints we had to endure were our own and those of our children, not dozens of students and their parents.

Then came summer, when the coronavirus was supposed to disappear like David Copperfield. What did disappear were our vacations and our patience, especially for the ever-changing school reopening plans.

As we tried to enjoy our staycations, educators worked feverishly to prepare for the 2020-21 school year. They knew it was going to be different and more challenging than the average school year.

Like us, they watched for every update from federal, state and local agencies. And like us, they frequently were frustrated and confused by each update.

# **The character of a teacher**

Perhaps lost this summer in all the fuss over reopening schools was understanding who teaches our children. Many teachers engage their vocation with the utmost seriousness. In fact, thousands of public educators throughout Texas—and thousands more in other states—are committed followers of Jesus who see their calling to teach as an expression of their Christian faith.

Over the summer, I heard teachers grieve over not being able to finish last year in-person with their students. I heard their concerns for students who need additional help and resources. I listened to them talk through their frustration about all the unknowns going into a new school year.

Humming through everything I heard teachers say was their dedication to their calling. I want you to hear it, too.

## **Called to teach**

I asked a handful of teachers, “What do you want people to know about teachers going into this new school year?” Their responses follow.

### **Alyssa Ross, middle school English teacher**

“Teachers want to be seen as human and not just a service. We love our students, beyond any doubt. We are flexible because our role as educators requires us to be.

“Please be patient with us, though, as we are learning new things. There is a lot of new information, new technology platforms and new ways of doing even simple things, like taking attendance. We are also learning new students.

“We want to do our best, and we have quite high expectations of ourselves.

“Please be patient, and extend grace. We are doing all we can.”

### **Daniella Tecuatl, elementary ESL specialist**

“One of the most rewarding things about being a teacher is seeing the spark in children’s eyes as learning is happening. I am not quite sure how much of that I will be able to get standing in front of a screen or behind a mask and face shield, but I will do my best to continue to inspire, support and facilitate learning.

“I know flexibility, collaboration and a positive attitude towards new and different challenges will have to be my daily companions ... knowing the children’s and staff’s safety must be our first priority.”

### **Maddie Hampton, K-5th grade special education**

“I think the thing most teachers are asking for is grace for this school year. No one knows, and there are no clear black-and-white answers. We all want our students back in the classroom, but not if that means risking everyone’s safety.

“Teaching is hard, and no one is perfect at it, but we are asking parents and everyone else to work with us. Listen to us when we are trying to advocate, not only for our kids, but for ourselves.

“Educating your kids is so much more than just a job, and we don’t take that calling lightly. We are doing the best we can with what’s been given to us.”

### **Danielle Estrada, 5th grade math teacher**

“As this new school year begins, each school district has made the best decisions they can based on what they know. We all need grace.

“I know I will give 110 percent to all of my students, no matter if they are in my physical classroom or my virtual classroom. This will be a new learning curve for all, but I am sure with a little grace we can be successful.

“I miss school. I miss the routines. I’m anxious and excited. Most of all, I’m looking forward to meeting my new group of students. I pray every day for them and the year ahead.

“If we choose to make the best out of our current situation, it could be our best year yet.”

## **Making this the “best year yet”**

Teachers don’t teach for the money, and they sure don’t do it for the glory. Many teach because they are called—compelled, even—to invest in the lives and futures of others.

We’re not likely this year to pay teachers what they’re worth, despite our new appreciation for them. At the very least, we can extend them as much grace as they give us in dedication.

But since they are rising to the challenge presented by education in a pandemic, perhaps we can rise to the challenge of resourcing our educators in equal measure.

More than one educator has communicated that teachers need the support of families more than ever to ensure the connection stays strong remotely.

A good place to start is for all of us—whether we have children or not—to pray for our educators, to encourage them and to find ways to lend a hand. We all can do that.

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