



The Leader in Me® Newsletter

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Potential

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Greetings. The cold, ice, and snowstorms of this winter have certainly been challenging. Treacherous driving, sub-zero wind chills, and delayed flights have pushed our limits. Some days, the potential for warmer days ahead is the one thing that motivates us. Potential is defined as capable of becoming or being; possible, as opposed to actual; a latent excellence or ability that may or may not be developed.

Every child has potential and, although it's difficult to see sometimes, this includes children who push our limits. A culture that provides opportunities for all children—but especially challenging children—to see their potential may be the motivator that changes everything.

In Daniel Pink's newest book, he references a study done with three fifth-grade classrooms. Over a week, the children in one group were told they had the neatest classroom in the school. Children in the second group were simply told to be neat—pick up trash, tidy their desks, and keep the classroom clean. The third group was the control group. When litter in the classroom before the experiment was measured to litter in the classroom after the experiment, the group that was told they were the neatest took first place by a lot. "Merely assigning that positive label—helping the students frame themselves in comparison with others—elevated their behavior."

Mary Ruth Coleman, Ph.-D. explains, "Potential, 'existing in possibility: capable of developing into actuality,' is both strong and fragile. An acorn has the potential to become an oak tree, but it can also become squirrel food. Potential

is not a guarantee of success, rather a promise of hope. Teachers provide the nurturing support and advocacy needed to ensure that this potential grows.”

Think about the most challenging child in your classroom. Do you see her potential? Does she see her potential? What opportunities could turn her possibilities into realities?

Consider:

- The child who talks non-stop in class flourishes as a master of ceremonies.
- The child who teases learns empathy through a community-service project.
- The child who is painfully shy gains confidence by mentoring a new student.

Most of us still remember a teacher who saw something in us that we might not have seen in ourselves. For me, that teacher was Miss Muir, my seventh-grade speech teacher. I never thought I could speak well in public until she helped me believe in myself. What a difference she made in my life during such an awkward time for me. I'll never forget her and how she affirmed me and my talents!

“Every day we have the lives of our students in our hands. Every day we have an opportunity to help our students grow and thrive. Every day we have a chance to nurture the potential of our students, helping them to be their best.”
-- Mary Ruth Coleman.

All my best,

Sean Covey

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Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see.

- Neil Postman, author of *The Disappearance of Childhood*