

# for teachers everywhere

dear teachers,  
you've been here for yet another year  
it's clear you're still not  
in it for the money.

in the classroom where the magic happens  
spelling--without spells,  
cooperation without incantation  
ingenuity without sorcery  
desperate to help students focus--  
no hocus-pocus here  
just hard work, blood, sweat and tears

thank you.

from preschool to professor  
willing to wade through the normal chaos  
and crazy of the classroom  
intense enough in 2019  
but in march 2020  
the bottom fell out of everything

will this last a few weeks?  
a few months?  
few of us imagined it would be a few years  
years of exhaustion  
exponentially heightened  
expectations and fears  
everchanging best practices  
new protocols for online learning  
hybrid learning  
super-duper-sanitized learning  
oh, it's a newly revised policy--surprise!  
revised again...and again, and again  
so many evolutions of havoc  
so many unprecedented reasons to panic

it's been chaos  
on crack

thank you  
for showing up.

teachers --  
unsung heroes  
underpaid gurus  
math whisperers  
story tellers  
science sages  
detail noticers  
inside-outside-voice managers  
communication cadres  
cooperation facilitators  
skill builders  
seed planters  
wisdom imparters  
fire starters

you go to work at a school  
you choose the mystery - wild beauty  
of hours, years with a child, children,  
teenagers, college kids  
the strangely sweet  
unpredictability of humanity  
never the same day twice

thank you  
for showing up.

you plan  
you tweak  
you toss it out  
you try again  
you reach out  
and teach out  
through a screen  
through a mask  
through a pandemic.

when I sit for a minute to envision, imagine  
the upheaval  
the exhausted pace you've sustained  
the landscape of education  
endlessly shifting sand  
among virtual and literal  
canvases platforms and desks  
i can hardly fathom the weight you've carried  
when can you rest?  
you're tired, your family needs you,  
you need a break but how can you take one  
learning as you go, so much that's unknown  
and still  
you show up.

you stay up too late  
you get up too early  
you pour more of yourself  
into their minds, their hearts  
because you know  
[crazy, quirky, sweet, angry, anxious,  
silly, sad, struggling, seeking]  
your students  
are treasures!

the things you've seen  
the heartbreak you hold  
stories shared and  
stories untold  
by students who walk  
into your classroom  
and into your heart

thank you.

improvisation  
perspiration  
desperation  
determination  
innovation  
enduring nation  
continuation . . .

on your shoulders  
at your desks  
on your watch  
by your courage--  
the students of the world  
are heard, seen,  
understood, inspired,  
and  
they rise.

*-nancy bartelt*

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