

HOPE 2.0

December 15, 2017

In this week's HOPE Note, I want to share a simple story that I have used throughout my years as an educator and in my work as a mentor to aspiring educators and administrators. It's the story of the starfish. During my years in the field, I have faced steep budget crises, students who failed to see the value of education, parents who lacked the mental wellness to support themselves let alone their children, and systems that have persistently failed the neediest of students.

There were days when I likened my experiences to shoveling a landfill with a teaspoon. I wondered if I'd ever be able to fill the voids that poverty, abuse, trauma, empty promises and broken dreams had forged in the lives of my students. For years I toiled over whether or not I had the stamina and the emotional resources to meet the needs of all of my students. The story of the Starfish helped me during these moments and I pass it on to you. Many of you may be familiar with the story, and if you are I hope that you will draw new strength and inspiration.

Stay encouraged. Stay vigilant. Believe in the positive impact that you have on students, no matter which job you hold. Even if that impact changes the life of just *one* child, you have made a difference. Enjoy.

Once upon a time, there was an old man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of walking on the beach every morning before he began his work. Early one morning, he was walking along the shore after a big storm had passed and found the vast beach littered with starfish as far as the eye could see, stretching in both directions.

Off in the distance, the old man noticed a small boy approaching. As the boy walked, he paused every so often and as he grew closer, the man could see that he was occasionally bending down to pick up an object and throw it into the sea. The boy came closer still and the man called out, "Good morning! May I ask what it is that you are doing?"

The young boy paused, looked up, and replied "Throwing starfish into the ocean. The tide has washed them up onto the beach and they can't return to the sea by themselves," the youth replied. "When the sun gets high, they will die, unless I throw them back into the water."

The old man replied, "But there must be tens of thousands of starfish on this beach. I'm afraid you won't really be able to make much of a difference."

The boy bent down, picked up yet another starfish and threw it as far as he could into the ocean. Then he turned, smiled and said, "It made a difference to that one!"

adapted from The Star Thrower, by Loren Eiseley (1907 – 1977)

Happy Holidays, Merry Christmas and have a great weekend!
Tamara Willis, Ph.D.
Superintendent

Piece of the Puzzle

Please join me in thanking our PTO/PTSA parents for everything that they do to support our teachers and our students. From organizing staff luncheons to manning our book fairs, we appreciate their efforts in making our schools caring and supportive communities.