

## What Your Colleagues Are Saying . . .

“If you are looking for the magic that successful teachers use—you have found it in this book! Whether you are a beginning teacher looking for ways to engage your students or an experienced teacher seeking inspiration, this book is for you. *Real Talk About Classroom Management* shares the behind-the-scenes secrets that teachers use to maintain their balance, stay inspired, and keep the joy in teaching. Thank you, Serena, for sharing your wisdom.”

**Carol Pelletier Radford**

Author, *“When I Started Teaching I Wish I Had Known . . .”*:  
*Weekly Wisdom for Beginning Teachers*;  
*The First Years Matter*; and *Mentoring in Action*

“*Real Talk About Classroom Management* offers a fresh, much-needed perspective on student-centered practices that should be on every educator’s shelf, no matter their experience level! The focus of every practice rests squarely on ensuring that students feel seen, valued, and heard. Serena Pariser’s strategies are highly practical, universally relevant, and easy to apply, making the text a perennial resource for all grades and subject levels taught.”

**Lindsay Prendergast**

Region 3 Support Lead, Clark County School District

“*Real Talk About Classroom Management* provides a true, intimate look at many layers of what goes on behind the scenes in a classroom. The book is filled with real-life examples, scenarios, and quotes from teachers and students; readers at all experience levels will easily connect with this content. Serena Pariser knows that true classroom management relies on a balance of mind, body, and soul—but most importantly, it’s centered in the heart.”

**Darius Phelps**

Associate Professor and PhD Candidate in English Education,  
Teachers College, Columbia University

“I appreciate Serena Pariser’s obvious skill, experience, and creativity in working with students. Her insights and strategies are grounded in mutual respect between students and adults and provide an authentic roadmap to strengthening classroom management.”

**Natalie Bernasconi**

Educator, Santa Cruz, California

Do not copy, post, or distribute

# Real Talk About Classroom Management

Second Edition

Do not copy, post, or distribute

*This book is dedicated to the person who encouraged me to submit my very first book to publishers. You've transformed my life, just as you have done for many others. Thank you, Edward Deroche.*

# Real Talk About Classroom Management

57 Best Practices That Work and  
Show You Believe in Your Students

Second Edition

Serena Pariser

CORWIN

Copyright ©2024 by SAGE Publications, Inc.

This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

FOR INFORMATION:

Corwin  
A SAGE Company  
2455 Teller Road  
Thousand Oaks, California 91320  
(800) 233-9936  
www.corwin.com

SAGE Publications Ltd.  
1 Oliver's Yard  
55 City Road  
London EC1Y 1SP  
United Kingdom

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.  
Unit No 323-333, Third Floor, F-Block  
International Trade Tower Nehru Place  
New Delhi 110 019  
India

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.  
18 Cross Street #10-10/11/12  
China Square Central  
Singapore 048423

---

Vice President and  
Editorial Director: Monica Eckman  
Executive Editor: Tori Mello Bachman  
Associate Content  
Development Editor: Sarah Ross  
Content Development Editor: Sharon Wu  
Product Associate: Zachary Vann  
Production Editor: Tori Mirsadjadi  
Copy Editor: Shannon Kelly  
Typesetter: C&M Digitals (P) Ltd.  
Cover Designer: Scott Van Atta  
Marketing Manager: Margaret O'Connor

Copyright © 2024 by Corwin Press, Inc.

All rights reserved. Except as permitted by U.S. copyright law, no part of this work may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

When forms and sample documents appearing in this work are intended for reproduction, they will be marked as such. Reproduction of their use is authorized for educational use by educators, local school sites, and/or noncommercial or nonprofit entities that have purchased the book.

All third-party trademarks referenced or depicted herein are included solely for the purpose of illustration and are the property of their respective owners. Reference to these trademarks in no way indicates any relationship with, or endorsement by, the trademark owner.

Printed in the United States of America

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Names: Pariser, Serena, author.

Title: Real talk about classroom management : 57 best practices that work and show you believe in your students / Serena Pariser.

Description: Second edition. | Thousand Oaks, California : Corwin, 2024. |

Series: Corwin teaching essentials | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2023039206 | ISBN 9781071922552 (paperback) | ISBN 9781071932353 (epub) | ISBN 9781071932360 (epub) | ISBN 9781071932377 (pdf)

Subjects: LCSH: Classroom management. | Effective teaching.

Classification: LCC LB3013 .P28 2024 | DDC 371.102/4—dc23/eng/20230928  
LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2023039206>

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

24 25 26 27 28 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

**DISCLAIMER:** This book may direct you to access third-party content via web links, QR codes, or other scannable technologies, which are provided for your reference by the author(s). Corwin makes no guarantee that such third-party content will be available for your use and encourages you to review the terms and conditions of such third-party content. Corwin takes no responsibility and assumes no liability for your use of any third-party content, nor does Corwin approve, sponsor, endorse, verify, or certify such third-party content.

# Contents

---

List of Videos	xi
Acknowledgments	xiii
About the Author	xv

Introduction	1
--------------	---

## **Part 1. First Weeks of School** 8

<b>Best Practice #1: Build Mutually Respectful Relationships With Students From Day 1</b>	10
---	----

<b>Best Practice #2: Nurture a Belonging Classroom</b>	15
--	----

<b>Best Practice #3: Make It About the Students and the Importance of Student Collaboration on Day 1</b>	19
--	----

<b>Best Practice #4: Set Your Routine and Structures Early . . . and Keep Them!</b>	23
---	----

<b>Best Practice #5: Use Empowering Language Instead of Controlling Language</b>	27
--	----

<b>Best Practice #6: Create Purposeful Seating Charts</b>	32
---	----

<b>Best Practice #7: Create Room Environments That Foster Student Belonging</b>	42
---	----

## **Part 2. Forming Positive Relationships With Your Students** 46

<b>Best Practice #8: Recognize Your Power and Use It Positively</b>	49
---	----

<b>Best Practice #9: Celebrate Mistakes as Learning Opportunities</b>	55
---	----

<b>Best Practice #10: Strengthen Inclusion and Belonging for All Students</b>	58
---	----

<b>Best Practice #11: Stick With the Students Who Challenge Us the Most</b>	62
---	----

<b>Best Practice #12: Become a Teacher Detective to Discover Why Students Aren't Performing Well Academically</b>	67
---	----

<b>Best Practice #13: Focus on the Positive and Create Positive Students</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Best Practice #14: Dig Deeper With Connection Kids</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Best Practice #15: Reward Students</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Best Practice #16: Motivating Students in Elementary, Middle, and High School and How That Might Look Different</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Best Practice #17: Consider Behavior Contracts</b>	<b>90</b>

### **Part 3. Engagement and Instruction** **102**

<b>Best Practice #18: Make Learning Powerfully Authentic and Make It Transferable</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>Best Practice #19: Learn and Grow Using Trusted Sources</b>	<b>109</b>
<b>Best Practice #20: Pick up the Pace</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Best Practice #21: Use Arm’s Length Voice</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>Best Practice #22: Use Technology in Lessons to Enhance, Not Replace</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>Best Practice #23: Be One or Two Steps Ahead of the Class</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>Best Practice #24: Keep Everything Contextualized (Including SEL Lessons) and Do Projects!</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>Best Practice #25: Tap Into Students’ Curiosity With Problem-Based Learning</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>Best Practice #26: Rely on Formative Assessment to Drive Instruction</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>Best Practice #27: Be a Warm Demander to Challenge and Support Students</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>Best Practice #28: Lean Into Learning Activities That Are More Engaging, Fun, and Collaborative Rather Than Relying on Direct Instruction</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>Best Practice #29: Take Risks in Your Lessons</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>Best Practice #30: Prepare Ahead for When You Just Can’t Be There</b>	<b>151</b>



Best Practice #31: Implement Creative Discipline	155
Best Practice #32: Vary Levels of Noise in the Classroom	160
Best Practice #33: Make Groupwork Work	164
Best Practice #34: Let Their Creative Juices Flow	169
Best Practice #35: Teach Every Different Type of Learner	172
Best Practice #36: Have <i>No</i> Doubts . . . but Be Prepared to Have (Just a Few) Lessons Flop	180

## **Part 4. Partnering and Cultivating Relationships With Stakeholders** **184**

Best Practice #37: Work With Parents and Caregivers as Partners	192
Best Practice #38: Make Coteaching Work	197
Best Practice #39: Lean on Social Workers and School Counselors	204
Best Practice #40: Find a Mentor	208
Best Practice #41: Watch and Learn	211
Best Practice #42: Listen With Your Mind	213
Best Practice #43: Earn the Respect of Administrators	215

## **Part 5. Spins That Will Wow Your Students** **222**

Best Practice #44: Host Guest Speakers	226
Best Practice #45: Know That Students Are Ready to Have Power and Voice	231
Best Practice #46: Show Your Students You Care	235
Best Practice #47: Laugh Together, Learn Together	240
Best Practice #48: Give Gifts Without Strings Attached	244
Best Practice #49: Empower Students With Student-Led Conferences	247
Best Practice #50: Use Peer Mediation to Teach Conflict Resolution Skills, Foster More Positive Classrooms, and Make Your Life Easier	251

**Best Practice #51: Get Students to Behave  
When You're Covering a Colleague's Class** 256

**Best Practice #52: Surprise!** 260

**Part 6. Staying Afloat** 266

**Best Practice #53: Balance Your Life** 270

**Best Practice #54: How to Turn Around a  
Potentially Difficult Parent or Caregiver Meeting** 275

**Best Practice #55: Be Aware of Secondary Trauma  
and Compassion Fatigue** 280

**Best Practice #56: Cultivate Healthy Relationships  
With Colleagues** 286

**Best Practice #57: How to Navigate Colleague Conflict** 289

Handy To-Go List of Fifty-Seven Teaching Dos and Don'ts 294

The End . . . of the Beginning 298

Real Advice: Teacher to Teacher 300

References 305

Index 307

# List of Videos

---

**Note from the Publisher:** The author has provided video and web content throughout the book that is available to you through QR (quick response) codes. To read a QR code, you must have a smartphone or tablet with a camera. We recommend that you download a QR code reader app that is made specifically for your phone or tablet brand.

Videos may also be accessed at [resources.corwin.com/realtalk2e](https://resources.corwin.com/realtalk2e).

## **Part 1. First Weeks of School**

6.1 Purposeful Seating Charts

## **Part 2. Forming Positive Relationships With Your Students**

9.1 Creating an Environment Where It's Safe to Make Mistakes

12.1 Teacher Detective

## **Part 3. Engagement and Instruction**

Opener: Jeff Kirschbaum Explains How Instruction Directly Affects Classroom Management

25.1 Solving Global Issues

26.1 Ways to Do Formative Assessments

27.1 What Is a Warm Demander?

28.1 Strategies That Engage Learners

32.1 Incorporating Music Into a Classroom

35.1 Add Variety to Your Instruction

## **Part 4. Partnering and Cultivating Relationships With Stakeholders**

38.1 What Coteaching Can Look Like

38.2 Utilizing Your Coteacher's Strengths

## **Part 5. Spins That Will Wow Your Students**

45.1 Give Students Power and Voice

47.1 Show Students Your Sense of Humor

50.1 Peer Mediation in Elementary School

50.2 Peer Mediation in Middle or High School

52.1 How Surprises Can Increase Student Engagement

**Part 6. Staying Afloat**

Opener: Tips on Staying Afloat from Rebekah Madren

53.1 Work-Life Balance

53.2 Teacher Self-Care

54.1 Positively Engaging Parents

57.1 Positively Engaging Colleagues

Do not copy, post, or distribute

# Acknowledgments

---

A teacher's journey relies on many people and lessons along the way. I'd like to acknowledge those who have helped my journey and sincerely express my gratitude to those listed below.

To my first sixth-grade math class in West Philadelphia, who taught me that you must connect with students before and during teaching content. And thank you for also showing me what happens when you do not!

To all of my students who sat in desks in front of me day after day, you truly were my teachers through the years. Thank you.

Thank you to Gompers Preparatory Academy and Vincent Riveroll for showing me what it truly means to connect with a child.

Thank you Mel, Dad, Ellen, Carla, Ron, Joe, Rob, Pam, and Mom.

Thanks to my nieces, Sydney, Aria, Sam, Sloane, and Skylar, for unknowingly giving me inspiration to write this book in the hopes you'll have progressive classrooms that challenge, engage, and support you academically, emotionally, and socially all through your schooling.

Zippy and Carl, thank you for your support and kindness.

Corwin has been supportive, always, in my book writing journey. Thank you for taking a chance on me in the very beginning.

And finally, I'd like to express endless gratitude to Tori Mello Bachman, executive editor at Corwin, for going above and beyond and bringing this book to life.

## Publisher's Acknowledgments

Corwin gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the following reviewers:

Darius Phelps  
Associate Professor, Teachers College, Columbia University  
New York NY

Natalie Bernasconi  
Educator, UC Santa Cruz  
Spreckels, CA

Do not copy, post, or distribute

# About the Author

---



**Serena Pariser** is the best-selling author of several professional books for educators, including *Real Talk About Classroom Management: 50 Best Practices That Work* and *Show You Believe in Your Students* (Corwin, 2018) and *Real Talk About Time Management: 35 Best Practices for Educators* (Corwin, 2020). She is a coauthor of *Five to Thrive: Answers to Your Biggest Questions About Creating a Dynamic Classroom*

(Corwin, 2022) and *It Starts in the Classroom: Character Education for a Better Tomorrow* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2022).

Serena taught English language arts for many years, primarily in San Diego, California, and in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She has experience working with most grades in a variety of school settings across the spectrum, from underresourced urban public schools to affluent private schools. Serena was honored as Teacher of the Year at Gompers Preparatory Academy, located in San Diego.

She served as assistant director of field experience at the University of San Diego, where she taught graduate and undergraduate classes for teachers in training. In addition, Serena was selected to be a national evaluator for Schools of Character.

A Fulbright scholar, Serena coaches educators across the United States and around the globe, from California to Kathmandu. Her passions include progressive classroom management best practices, bringing curriculum to life, time management for teachers, and weaving character education into the curriculum.

In her spare time, Serena travels and loves to experience the world for weeks at a time with just a backpack strapped to her back and a smile on her face.

Serena's website can be found at [www.serenapariser.com](http://www.serenapariser.com), where she writes educational articles that are enjoyed by a large audience of teachers. She is most active on social media on X @SerenaPariser and maintains a blog at [www.serenapariser.com](http://www.serenapariser.com), where she writes articles for educators. She can also be directly contacted at [serena.pariser@gmail.com](mailto:serena.pariser@gmail.com).

Do not copy, post, or distribute



# Introduction

---

The only constant is change. As teachers, how do we adjust to these ever-changing times while keeping our confidence and cool?

The reality is that we are preparing the students in our classrooms for jobs that might not even exist yet. Let that sink in for a second.

In 2021 Education Week surveyed executives at some of the nation's leading companies, including companies that specialized in everything from consulting to hospitality to automotive, with the prompt, "Tell us what you'll want and expect from today's K–12 students when you're eventually hiring them, and make suggestions for how schools can provide students with those skills" (Education Week, 2021). The responses included these skills:

- **Agility and flexibility.** Ability to sense unpredictability and act quickly in response; ability to identify new ideas and approaches. Demonstrate curiosity—ask questions and have the courage to move quickly.
- **Growth mindset and resilience.** Desire to continuously learn. Ability to recover and bounce back from adversity and hardships. Take ownership and accountability; develop strategies for reflection and learning.
- **Teamwork and collaboration.** Desire to work with others different from yourself—different backgrounds, genders, functions, geographies, cultures—to create better, more durable results. Ability to work as a member of a team to achieve an agreed set of goals.
- **Learning to learn.** The world is changing fast, and successful companies are evolving even faster to serve their customers and remain competitive. Associates with the ability to identify and anticipate changes in the environment and who can acquire new knowledge and skills will be needed and effective in this environment.
- **Conflict resolution.** Workers in all fields will need to be able to independently resolve conflict.

These skills are specifically taught and practiced in classrooms where students become a community of learners, where students are encouraged to ask questions and challenge each other, where critical thinking is more valued than rote memorization, and where every student is seen and heard. This is where I want to offer a helping hand, because it's not always easy to create that type of classroom.



[Read the full Education Week article here.](#)

To read a QR code, you must have a smartphone or tablet with a camera. We recommend that you download a QR code reader app that is made specifically for your phone or tablet brand.

In this book I'll tell it like it is to you, teacher to teacher. I'll share real best practices that have worked time after time, real anecdotes to illustrate those best practices, real conversations I've had with my students, and real classroom management scenarios I've experienced in my classroom. (The only aspect of the book that isn't real is the student names.) I would like to share what I have learned with those who are in need or perhaps just curious to build on what they already know.

The beautiful thing about our profession is that you will always be needed. And you will most likely always laugh with your class every day because Camille said something outrageous, or Javier glued his hands together by accident, and yes, students still pass gas in class at every grade level. That's never going to change. Here's more good news: Your students are more aware today than ever, they are more curious about our changing world more than ever, and they are more empathetic than ever. Let's take advantage of that in our classrooms and help them keep up with today's world.

It's important to hold on to why we first went into this profession and cherish that feeling we get when a lesson goes really well. Teaching K–12 students is one of the most rewarding professions when we lead with love, follow our gut instincts, and know we are shaping the adults of tomorrow. To give students the opportunity to thrive we need to create and nurture classrooms where positive energy flows, students are collaborating, academic rigor is high and engaging, and strong student-to-student as well as student-to-teacher relationships exist. I'm here to help you get there because I've messed up, but then I figured it out and thrived. I want the same for you and your students because we are in one of the most noble professions in the world. This book will get vulnerable at some parts and I'm okay with that. So, here's a bit of my story.

## Who Am I? And Why Am I Writing This Book?

The first classroom management strategy I tried in my first year was good old-fashioned yelling. I figured if I could get my voice louder and stronger than the students', I could startle them into listening. It's really all I could think to do with a rowdy class of twenty-nine sixth graders. I eventually realized yelling is only a short-term—*very* short-term—and detrimental solution.

The first time I realized yelling can be detrimental not only to a classroom but also to your health was around the middle of my very first year in the classroom. I noticed my ears ached after class. The pain became so unbearable that I eventually went to an ear doctor. The doctor told me both of my eardrums were very swollen, which was causing the pain. He asked what I did for a living, and I told him I was a sixth-grade teacher. He chuckled and replied, "That's why your eardrums are swollen." My ears did return to normal, but it was literally a painful wake-up call as

to how much I was raising my voice in the classroom. Something had to change. If *my* ears were in pain, I couldn't even imagine how my students felt. Something was off, and I was determined to find a better way to teach. This is where my quest to find the best practices in teaching began.

I've always considered myself fearless. I've bungee jumped and sky-dived in New Zealand on the same day, rafted through class-four rapids, free-fall jumped from casinos in Las Vegas, snorkeled with sharks, back-packed solo through Australia and Costa Rica, canoed down deadly hippopotamus-infested waters in Zimbabwe, and jumped in frozen lakes for fun—twice. None of these adventures comes close to the accomplishment I felt when I finally figured out what makes classrooms work. Most of us, including myself, make mistakes trying to figure out what works. Most new teachers have little help, a few teaching books, and maybe a classroom management course or two to guide us. I'd like to give back to the profession and tell you everything I know and direct you to practices that most teachers say work. I'm here to make it easier for you.

I am not claiming to know the only right way to teach. What makes teaching so difficult, so complex, and so beautiful is that there are many right ways and more are being discovered every day. However, many best practices form a common thread among good teachers. I am sharing my knowledge and insights about what has worked for me and my peers. What is revealed in this book is just the tip of the iceberg, and it took me years to figure it out through trial and error, through tears and triumph. I hope to save you from some of the mistakes I made and share with you the many joys I had in the classroom and how I got there.

I wrote this for you, so you can spend less time on the errors and more time on discovering what works for you and your students. Many of my chapters are inspired by *real questions* teachers have asked me as we were walking down the hallway, during lunch, during my prep period, after school, or through e-mail. Every time a teacher asked me a question, I immediately started developing a new chapter for this book, because if one person is asking, there's every chance that other people have the same question.

Achieving these insights took me years of practice, trying any and every teaching method, reading the research, working closely with a mentor, and working in challenging school settings. Through my growing determination, curiosity about what works in teaching, passion to always be better, and my love of the students, I earned Teacher of the Year in my school and was awarded a Fulbright Distinguished Teacher grant to coach educators in Botswana, Africa, on student engagement, technology, and student-centered lessons. I've coached teachers in Kathmandu, Nepal, on student-centered lessons and empowering students. I've worked with students from Eastern Europe and Russia, taught K–12 classes in Turkey, and taught graduate-level classes at the University of San Diego to teacher candidates entering our beautiful profession. I've been invited to keynote education conferences and have consulted with districts around the country. What I'm saying is these strategies work.

What I found from coaching teachers and working with students around the world is that even despite language barriers, there are universal best practices that consistently bring success to teachers and students. I knew I had to share what I learned and accomplished with others. These positive and powerful moments are what got me up way too early in the morning and what kept me working countless hours after school. I hope you can use this book to build on my experiences for even greater successes in your own classrooms and homes.

And before we move any further, understand that in these pages I'm by no means saying do more; I'm suggesting that you think differently. When we think of classroom management, we traditionally think of ways to keep students quiet, well behaved, and on task. However, in order to prepare students for today's world, we should think of classroom management as guiding students to work collaboratively, communicate

We should think of classroom management as guiding students to work collaboratively, communicate with each other, and listen to their classmates' thoughts and opinions.

with each other, and listen to their classmates' thoughts and opinions. We now know classroom management practices that are better for students than what has been done in the past. Older classroom management practices traditionally focus on compliance, while more modern, progressive practices focus on student well-being, social-emotional learning, belonging, equity, and engagement. Classroom management is about

building students up, not breaking them down. This means we are starting to shift our own perspective.

Times are changing. According to a study conducted by Child Trends, Inc. (2015), there are five critical skills most likely to increase the odds of success across all outcomes and which employers expect employees to have. The first three are social skills, communication, and higher-order thinking skills (including problem-solving, critical thinking, and decision-making). These three are supported by the intrapersonal skills of self-control and positive self-concept.

Here's a real-world statistic to support this: It has been reported that 85 percent of those who are terminated from jobs are let go because of inadequate social skills. According to a *Forbes* article discussing what skills employers look for, "Employers also want new hires to have technical knowledge related to the job, but that's not nearly as important as good teamwork, decision-making and communication skills, and the ability to plan and prioritize work" (Adams, 2014). Today, companies are hiring people who can work independently just as well as they can with others. Obedience is not valued as much as other 21st century skills, which has teachers rethinking how this translates to classroom management for us. How do we prepare our students for the real world?

Perhaps you've already heard of a few of these best practices. Or perhaps you have your own twists on the practices, which are perfect to share with your colleagues in the discussion questions at the end of each

chapter. The point is that each of these practices warrants discussion because they are all critical parts of what makes learners engaged, confident, empowered, and independent.

## Why Teach?

They say the person you fall in love with should bring out the best in you, making your light shine. The same goes for the job you fall in love with. Teaching is one of the most vulnerable professions out there, yet it should make your best qualities shine, lighting you up from the inside out. Teaching did this for me. It brought out characteristics in me that I did not know existed. It also exposed my raw weaknesses. However, those moments when my weaknesses were most glaring motivated me to work toward becoming a better teacher.

The kids out there need you. There might be times you mess up a lesson or a conversation with a student. That's more than okay, it's expected—you're human. It's all part of the process. As educators, we get to be exactly what they need, imperfections and all. How lucky are we?

There is something special about teaching. We all have our own reasons that drew us to this profession, and they are all unique from one another. I'm not sure if any of my teachers from middle or high school know I became a teacher. I'm pretty sure if you told them that I was a teacher, it would surprise them. Until college, I was never particularly motivated as a student. I flew under the radar and did just enough not to draw attention to myself. I wonder what was going on all of those years in the classroom when I was passing notes to my friends. (I filled an entire box of notes. My friends and I earned an *A* in note-writing, not note-taking.) My junior year of college is when my light switch went on and I actually started feeling smart. I became a different student.

My academically apathetic history is probably the single most important factor in why I have succeeded as a teacher. I understand why students get bored, feel unengaged, fall asleep, get rowdy, etc. I get it. But I also know how to convert that energy into engagement and excitement in the classroom.

I bet you can't find one teacher who hasn't shed a tear of joy the first time they found success in a student. If you look around any teacher's desk, you'll probably see a thank-you card hanging up from a student. These cards bring us so much joy. That's why I've included actual quotes from real students at the beginning of each chapter. Students remember the way we make them feel. You'll see the light switch turn on in a child's eyes when you explain a concept well and they get it. When you ask a teacher what they do, they'll usually smile as they explain what grade and subject they teach. You can't say that about many other professions. This book will show you ways to make your students feel good while learning. The emotional element is a significant part of the process for teacher and student alike.

A time will come in your teaching career when you feel lucky just to be a person in your students' lives every day, because they are phenomenal. And there's a point where your students, even when they are difficult, will feel lucky just to be in your class. With love, patience, skill, and creativity you will actually be working and changing a person's life in your classroom every day.

There's going to be a point where you are working way too hard, and that's where I'd like to come in and help take some of the load off of you. Whatever classroom management frustration you've had in your classroom, I've most likely been there (times two). I'm listening, I understand, and I can help. To all the teachers reading this book: Thank you for joining our beautiful profession. We need people like you.

—Serena

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Do not copy, post, or distribute