



TEACHER'S INSPIRE TO BUILD CHARACTER

by Evolina Maclang-Vicencio

Character building is the true objective of education. In order to build character, teachers must aspire to inspire. Here's a concept model on the why's and how's of how teachers inspire to build students' character:

Teachers Inspire to Build Character Model

WHY (Importance)	HOW Teachers <--> Students
Make teaching dynamic	Speech
Teach students to live well	Writings
To be great teachers	Actions

The above model shows why it is important to inspire students to build their character. The end goals of inspiring and building the character of students are to make teaching dynamic, to teach students to live well, and to be great teachers. In this model, it is not only teachers who inspire students. Students also inspire their teachers through their words, writings, and actions.

Here are some ways teachers inspire students.

1. Teachers inspire through their Speech

Teachers inspire by what they say and how they say it.

Flordeliza Reyes' study (2002) on teaching expertise showcased 69 outstanding teachers awarded by the Metrobank Foundation. In this study, she found out that learners can be affected by what others, especially their classmates and teachers, say about them. Positive feedback enhances students' self-esteem, and more often than not, they live up to people's expectations (self-fulfilling prophecy). The expert teachers communicate either overtly or implicitly their belief in their students.

Here's a touching story that illustrates how a teacher turned a setback into a shining moment for the student:

"It was investiture night in the Scout Troop. It was Jimmy's turn to give his speech. He looked at his parents' beaming faces and for the next minutes he delivered his piece eloquently. And then in the middle of his talk, something disastrous happened. He forgot what he was going to say. His face turned red, his hands sought each other frantically, and in desperation he looked at his Scoutmaster.

The Scoutmaster who had heard him practice several times, dictated what he was supposed to say, and Jimmy went on. For the next few minutes, the speech seemed more the Scoutmaster's than the boy's. But Jimmy finished it. He sat down with his eyes downcast. His mother was embarrassed; his father felt shame. The audience applauded charitably.

But the Scoutmaster was on his feet. 'I am happy than any of you can possibly understand because of what has just happened. You have seen a boy make a glorious victory out of what might have been a miserable failure.

Jimmy had a chance to quit. It would have been easy. But to finish the job in front of 200 people required the highest kind of bravery and courage I know. You may someday hear a better speech, but I am confident that you will never see a finer demonstration of the spirit of our troop than what Jimmy has just shown you to play the game even under difficulties.'

The applause that followed was thunderous. Jimmy's mother sat straight and proud. His father beamed. And Jimmy grinned.



What did the Scoutmaster teach Jimmy, his parents, and 200 people in the audience? Courage in the face of difficulties.”

2. Teachers Inspire Through Their Writings

How many teachers write notes to their students or give them cards on special occasions? These notes are kept and treasured by the students.

Two books that can be useful to teachers in writing encouraging thoughts and messages to students are *Lessons*, a small book edited by Dean Jaime An Lim of the FEU Institute of Arts and Sciences, and *10 Outstanding Filipino Teachers*. These books share stories of hope, success, fidelity, love, passion, commitment, lifelong vacations, and of leaving legacies for future generations of Filipinos.

3. Teachers Inspire Through Their Actions

“Well done is better than well said.”

In another point in Dr. Reyes's research which was mentioned earlier, college professors partly attribute their teaching expertise to the influence of their former teachers in elementary and high school (as reported by 44.9% of the expert teachers) and in college (according to 62.3% of the experts). Only six of the experts admit that their former graduate school professors have greatly influenced their teaching.

This finding highlights the importance of exposing prospective teachers to excellent teaching during their undergraduate years.

The participants claim that their former teachers' personal attributes, virtues, and excellent teaching have inspired them. They describe their former teachers as dynamic, motivating, patient, dedicated, persistent, warm, and competent. These former teachers believe in, and nurture students' capabilities, and they make their courses “easy to understand and to internalize.”

If teachers want to teach honesty, they should be honest themselves. If they want to teach their students responsibility, they should be responsible. If they want to teach punctuality, they should themselves be punctual.

Students Inspire Teachers

1. Students Inspire Through Their Speech

“Adam was a 6-year old boy fighting a battle with leukemia. He stayed at the hospital part of every month while receiving chemotherapy treatments. Despite his discomfort of the treatments, Adam was always smiling and cheerful. He had a way of finding the positive and the humor in any situation, however difficult.

“One day his teacher visited him and related, “After a whole day of teaching I was feeling tired and anxious. The rain outside only fueled my poor mood. I told Adam what a depressing day it was. Adam turned to me and cheerily replied, 'Every day is beautiful for me.'”

“From that day on I have never had a gloomy day. Even the grayest days bring a feeling of joy as I remember with gratitude the words of wisdom spoken by a very brave 6-year old boy named Adam.”

2. Students Inspire Through their Writing

Here is a poem written by one of my students in her reflection journal. She was enrolled in the course Critical and Creative Thinking Strategies at the University of the Philippines:

In this course, I have learned a lot
Lessons for the mind and especially for the heart
Every session provided something new
Each gave me a reflection that is so true!

Indeed I have been inspired by my teacher
To aspire in my field to become really better
To focus not on structures, but on my students
To guide and lead them to discover their talents.

I think the Course really captured my interest
It has challenged me to give my very best
And so I never missed to pass a journal reflection
Because I enjoyed writing each with much attention.

The Course, so to speak has truly equipped me
With the knowledge that I need to be creative and free
To do what I'm supposed to do without strife
To be a teacher not really of lessons but of life!

My gratitude to you, Dr. Vicencio
For showing the way for me and my classmates to grow
I guess the best fruit that you'll harvest
Is the thought that we can now fly from our nest.

3. Students Inspire through their Actions

In 1988, I had just won the Metrobank Outstanding Teacher Award and I was going to be videotaped teaching one of my Grade 4 classes. I have never ever practiced a demonstration lesson nor coached my pupils on what to say or do during a demonstration lesson. So, the day before, we had our regular lesson. Before we started the class, I announced that we would have visitors the following day who would videotape the class and for them to please, please study their lesson on first aid for emergencies. I guess my pupils sensed my nervousness because I must've made the announcement 40 times in 40 minutes. Anyway, after the class, 10-year old Tom Matic approached me and said, “Don't worry, Teacher, have faith in us.” Those were his exact words. I felt embarrassed at my seeming lack of faith. Needless to say, the children outdid themselves. They were so well-behaved; everybody volunteered to do every little thing even in being patients, a most unloved role in first aid.

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