



HERE WE GO

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WHAT'S YOUR MANTRA FOR THIS SCHOOL YEAR?

A recent meeting I attended started with this check-in question: What is your mantra for this school year? The range of responses spoke volumes about the climate in which we're all working. People were hopeful, pragmatic, struggling, laughing, worrying. My favorites included:

- Progress, not perfection.
- We got this.
- Doing the best we can.
- Yeah, we can do that.
- More chocolate.

It's not easy to stay centered right now, with so much uncertainty and so little to anchor us. Mantras can help us set expectations, find focus, and remind us of our core beliefs.

If this issue of *The Learning Professional* had a mantra, it might be: We're all stronger when we support each other. Networks of support are a core tenet of high-quality professional learning, as evident in the Standards for Professional Learning and Learning Forward's ongoing networks including, most recently, Digital Professional Learning for a Virtual World. And there's no question we all need to learn from and lean on each other even more than usual right now.

As authors in this issue show, there are many ways to support colleagues, supervisors, students, and families so that everyone can grow and thrive. Those strategies include deep listening (p. 28), teaming (p. 32), and coaching (p. 51). The tools section provides guidance and resources to help you conduct empathy interviews (p. 59) and form new types of instructional teams during remote learning (p. 54).

Supporting each other means having a strong focus on equity. Authors in this issue write about collaborative professional learning to dismantle racism (p. 24), address racial disparities in school discipline (p. 42), and build student agency (p. 28).

To support others, we also have to take care of ourselves. Simmons points out that "when teachers are stressed, their interactions with students are less warm, student achievement suffers, and the classroom climate is not as warm" and "a stressed and burned-out teaching force is an equity issue." She also reminds us that self-care has "revolutionary and radical aspects" because historically "care has not been distributed equitably."

Taking care of ourselves is a tall order these days. Sharron Helmke (p. 36) explains how leaders can set the tone and create the structures to make it possible. Jim Knight (p. 13) shares small but important steps we can each take, including reminding ourselves of our purpose.

In a much-shared article from NPR education reporter Anya Kamenetz (2020), a teacher recently shared her relatable struggle to balance teaching, parenting, and other responsibilities, saying, "I'm only one person." That could be a mantra in itself, a reminder to be reasonable with ourselves. But let's also focus on what we can do together. With collaboration and support, we can make this school year's whole greater than the sum of its parts.

REFERENCE

Kamenetz, A. (2020, Sept. 17). *'I'm only 1 person': Teachers feel torn between their students and their own kids*. news.wfsu.org/all-npr-news/2020-09-17/im-only-1-person-teachers-feel-torn-between-their-students-and-their-own-kids ■

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