

What's so hard about teaching?

Many times, this question is used to begin a public challenge of the need to adequately fund schools or to set the stage for identifying all of the ways that teachers and schools are inadequate. I'd like to use it, however, quite literally. What is so hard about teaching? If people who are not teachers could begin to get a sense of what is hard, actually, about teaching, it might help shift the public discourse from confrontation to collaboration and cooperation.

Along with those folks who are not in the field of education, I'd encourage administrators like myself and other non-teachers in our schools to take on the following challenge: Identify a young person you know who is between the ages of 10 and 17. Ask her/him to write a paragraph that presents an opinion she/he is passionate about, and that effectively convinces the reader to seriously consider this opinion as valid.

Read the completed paragraph and provide this young person with enough feedback for her/him to revise the paragraph and make it one notch better.

That's it. That's the challenge. Give it a try and find out what you learn. How did you motivate this young person? How did you provide concrete feedback that actually led to improved writing and thinking? What made it easy? What made it hard?

Send me an email and let me know what you have learned.

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