5 Questions Educators Must Ask Themselves Daily

So here are 5 questions, every educator should ask themselves every day in order to ensure they are in it for the "right" reasons.

**5 Questions**

1. **Am I excited about going to school today?** Rather than call my job, work, I look forward to the endless possibility of learning every day. This is not to say there are days where I don't feel well and that bad feelings make it challenging to get up. I am a human being and therefore bad days happen. However, if a bad day turns into many and for whatever reason it becomes a chore instead of a labor of love, it is time for me to seriously consider a shift in my career. Firmly, I believe that to be a highly effective and motivating teacher, we must invest ourselves completely and with a whole and open heart or else it will read on our faces and students will sense our hesitation. This can have a devastating effect on our own abilities to impact our students. Congruency in what we teach is essential and therefore what we say must match what we do.
2. **Do I still believe that I can learn new stuff about my content?** After 13 years of teaching English and Journalism, I'm still excited to learn new things about my content. To me, learning through my students' experiences and perspectives makes every day full of possibility and learning. This is the journey and it is very exciting. My students offer context that I could have never noticed and in doing so help me to see things differently and together we collaborate to develop new ideas. In addition to this, I can be listening to NPR or watching a movie or listening to music and I'll get a crazy idea that just may change the way we all see something. Since I've developed amazing relationships with my students when I ask them to trust me through my harebrained ideas, they usually go with me on the journey. Sometimes I don't think my ideas all the way through, but the kids always trust me and we learn together. I take risks. They see me model risk taking and sometimes I fail, but that's okay because that creates more opportunity for me to problem solve and grow.
3. **Are my students needs at the front of everything I do?** Let's face it, I'm not a teacher for me, I'm a teacher for my students. Having had my time as a high school student, it would be incredibly egotistical to make this experience about me. Instead, students are empowered to make important decisions about their learning and it is my job to listen when they speak and adjust accordingly. They know more about themselves than I know and therefore I need to teach them to trust that inner voice. It starts by allowing myself to trust them when they share. All learning in the space is determined by student need gathered in a number of different ways: one on one conversations and conferences, student reflections, self-assessment surveys and observations throughout our class time.
4. **How do I implement student voice and choice in my decision making for learning?** Students have great ideas and I must be open to hearing them. For example, I can't ask them to share what they think and then shut them down when I don't like what they say. Once empowered, students will rise to a number of occasions you didn't think possible. Step out of the way of student awesomeness and cheer them along being a great supporter and facilitator of their learning. Their ideas matter and therefore should factor in to everything we do in the class. So project choices must be purposefully planned with their feedback, considering the use of technology and interest with those choices. Students are allowed to write on blogs to develop their own voice, taught to use social media, to reflect on projects and to collaborate with each other to affect positive change in our learning space.
5. **What risks can I take today that model the growth mindset?** I can't expect students to take risks if I don't take them myself. This means often standing up against the system to try to improve their learning experiences. Each risk I take runs the risk of failure, but that is okay. [**Mistakes are beginning of growth**](http://bit.ly/JAt7Wj) and change can only come once we realize that must try and try again until we grow adequately to succeed. The [**tenacity**](http://bit.ly/KWjTVC) and fortitude developed through this process is invaluable in the learning and reflecting cycle, so we must model what we expect.

Each day is a potential for growth, not just as a teacher but as a learner and this must be evident in all that we do. Questions that propel us in this noble profession should not be driven by time off or pensions, but rather the enormous impact we can have to enact change in our world.