

COLLEAGUES TO LIFELONG COMPANIONS: TEACHERS BUILDING FRIENDSHIPS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

by:

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"Behind every great teacher is not only a classroom full of students, but also a circle of colleagues who become family." Teaching may seem like a solitary mission from the outside, but within the walls of every school are friendships quietly being built—friendships that turn late-night lesson planning into moments of laughter, and stressful deadlines into shared victories. Behind every great teacher stands not just a room buzzing with students, but a close-knit circle of colleagues who feel like family. From the outside, teaching can look like a one-person job, yet inside every school, friendships take root—turning bleary-eyed midnight lesson plans into bursts of laughter and looming deadlines into victories celebrated over cold coffee. For many teachers, a co-teacher isn't just someone they work beside—they turn into a trusted ally, the person you swap knowing glances with across the room, and a friend you keep for life.

Teaching may be a noble calling, but it's also among the toughest jobs out there—long hours, endless papers, and a classroom that never quite quiets down. A teacher's days run from planning lessons and keeping a lively class on track to juggling the pull of home and family, a path that demands patience, resilience, and unwavering dedication. Even in the middle of all the challenges, many teachers find steady support in the friendships they forge with colleagues, sometimes over quick chats by the copy machine. A simple project at work can spark connections that last for years, laying the groundwork for career growth and a sense of belonging you carry home. Only another teacher truly knows what it's like—the long nights, the buzzing classrooms, the constant balancing act. Those early mornings prepping lessons, the bleary nights spent marking essays, and the

rollercoaster of watching students soar or stumble are moments only fellow teachers truly understand. Studies show that strong support from colleagues is one of the best predictors of teacher satisfaction and staying in the job, with simple acts—like sharing lesson ideas over coffee—helping teachers stay committed despite the profession’s heavy demands (Schlichte, Yssel, & Merbler, 2005). Outside of work, teachers swap stories about birthdays, weddings, hard times, and heartaches, turning coworkers into close friends who show up with a hug or a kind word when it’s needed most.

It’s never easy to juggle work and home, but a quick laugh with fellow teachers can make the load feel lighter. In 2005, Kelchtermans described collegial relationships as “emotional buffers,” the kind that help teachers weather stress and keep burnout at bay—like a steady hand on your shoulder after a long day. A quick chat in the faculty room, a burst of laughter over a toppled stack of papers, or a quiet, honest talk after a rough day—all remind teachers, in small but powerful ways, that they’re never facing their struggles alone. These friendships spark real collaboration—co-teachers swap lesson ideas, trade tips for keeping a room calm, and back each other up, not just at work but in the everyday ups and downs of life.

What truly sets these bonds apart is how they leave a mark that lingers, like the faint scent of rain on warm pavement. In teaching, friendships often stick for years, lasting well after a move to another school, the quiet of retirement, or a leap into a new career. Morrison and Nolan (2007) note that when colleagues bond over a shared purpose and offer each other real emotional support—like listening after a rough client call—the friendship often lasts long after they’ve left the job. For teachers, these lasting bonds hold the sound of shared laughter, the grit that carried them through hard days, and the spark of a shared love for teaching. The truth is, teaching’s never a solo path—it’s shaped and brightened by the people who walk beside you, like the colleague who slips you a fresh cup of coffee before first period. The friendships teachers share hold them steady, like a hand on your shoulder, giving them the strength and joy to navigate both work and life.

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