

## WHEN TEACHING GIVES YOU TANGERINES

by:

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Teaching's a winding road—tough days, bright wins, and quiet joys—like the sudden gift of a ripe tangerine, small but enough to remind us why we are here. Each day in the classroom tests you—long hours, piles of papers to grade, shifting policies, and sometimes that bone-deep weariness you cannot shake. Teachers face higher levels of stress and burnout than most other professions, sometimes feeling drained before the last bell even rings. Still, even with all the challenges, teachers keep showing up—coffee in hand, ready to guide, encourage, and help shape their students' lives. The hardships sting, but the rewards make it worth it. They are not always big or something you can hold in your hands—sometimes they are a smile across the room, a heartfelt “thank you,” or the quiet triumph of a student reaching a goal.

Research shows that great teaching can transform learning, especially for students who have had fewer chances—sometimes it is the difference between reading haltingly and reading a whole page with confidence (Hanushek, 2010). Beyond the numbers on a test, it is the warm words, steady guidance, and quiet encouragement—like a calm voice saying, “you have got this”—that truly stay with students for years. A kind word, a patient ear, or someone who truly believes they can succeed can change the course of a student's studies—and the way they see themselves (Teachers Belonging: Why Teacher Affirmations Matter, 2023). We call these moments our “tangerines”—small bursts of sweetness you never see coming, like the first bite of ripe fruit on a warm afternoon. Through every challenge, the joy of teaching still glows—like sunlight spilling across a quiet classroom. Many teachers say that even on days when they are bone-tired or things go wrong, the work still feels like a calling, not just a paycheck (McKillop, 2023).

Recognition can take many shapes—a warm note from a former student, the nod of respect from a colleague—each one a quiet reminder of the difference a teacher makes. The real joy comes when you see a student’s breakthrough—that bright “aha!” Moment when the lesson suddenly makes sense, or the quiet confidence that blooms because someone trusted their potential. These affirmations spark our passion again and bring us back to the heart of why we teach—the quiet joy of watching a student’s eyes light up with understanding. Teachers do not just teach equations or grammar—they help shape who their students become, building character and resilience like a steady hand guiding clay on a wheel. The Pygmalion Effect shows how a teacher’s faith in a student can shape their success; expect great things, and you might see them tackle a tough problem with surprising confidence (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968).

When teachers build classrooms alive with encouragement, clear structure, and a sense of belonging, they offer more than lessons—they spark hope, restore dignity, and give students a reason to keep showing up. Henry Adams once said, “A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops” (25 Inspiring Education and Teacher Quotes, 2023). So when teaching hands you a bright, sun-warm tangerine, take it with thanks. They remind us that, even in the middle of tough days, teaching is planting seeds—like tucking a tiny acorn into the soil—never knowing exactly how or when it will grow.

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