

WHAT YOUR COLLEAGUES ARE SAYING ...

“I’m retiring from the classroom. What do I do now?” Many retiring teachers certainly don’t feel *finished* contributing. This book from Carol Pelletier Radford is a wonderful resource for teachers and school leaders who wonder what to do next. It’s packed with concrete, doable ideas for educators who still have so much to contribute. Whether you treat this book as a worktext or you just read through, you will discover ideas you might not have thought about.

Gretchen Bernabei

Author and Retired Teacher

Every once in a while a book is written that you didn’t know you needed to read. Carol Radford has written a book that allows you to explore the needs you might have and gives you help in examining them. The reader gets a gift of possibilities with new ideas and new ways to explore them for his/her own growth. I highly recommend this dynamic read.

Marilyn Frank

President, Retired Educators Association of Massachusetts

Carol Pelletier Radford invites teachers, especially those approaching retirement, to enter into a deep conversation, one that is both personal and professional, about the teacher they were and the teacher they can still be to new and experienced teachers. After thirty-five years in the classroom, I recently retired but felt I had more to contribute. This book honored all that I had learned and showed me ways I could offer those lessons to those teachers just entering the profession and those still creating their legacy.

Jim Burke

Author of *Teaching Better Day by Day*

Carol has set the standard for quality mentoring in the field and has devoted herself serving novice educators and those who support them. This book invites other seasoned educators to discover ways to share their wisdom, talent, and passion to ensure bright futures for those who follow in their footsteps.

Tami DuFault-Toomb

New Teacher Mentor Program Coordinator,
Linn Benton Lincoln ESD

Be a Legacy Teacher is a beautiful invitation for experienced educators to reimagine their influence beyond the traditional finish line called retirement. With the grace of a grandparent's wisdom and the curiosity of a beginner's mind, Carol Pelletier Radford offers poetic reflection, practical strategies, and profound respect for the lasting impact of educators.

Michael Nelson

Thought Partner, Instructional Leadership Collective,
Author, and Co-Host of the Leaders Coaching Leaders Podcast

A treasure trove of splendid ideas of how to utilize one of our most precious resources: the retired teacher. Radford adroitly leads her audience through networking silos, arriving at the final destination of legacy teacher—priceless!

Roberta (Bobbie) Margo

Recent Member of the National Education Association (NEA)
Retired Executive Council and NEA Retired Life Member
Current Member Education Minnesota Retired Governing Board

Be a Legacy Teacher: Five Purpose-Filled Pathways to Inspire Late Career and Retiring Educators provides a thoughtful step by step process for one to discern their future involvement in the field of education after retirement. The process leads one to best determine just what their educational legacy will be and how they can share their expertise with others as a means of making a long-lasting impact on newcomers to the profession as well as veteran teachers. The book is a great resource to have at your side as your educational journey continues into retirement.

Timothy D. Sullivan, Ed.D.

Former Vice President of the Massachusetts Teachers Association,
Former President of the Brockton Education Association,
Retired Teacher

Having worked closely with Carol Radford Pelletier, I know her deep commitment to uplifting educators. *Be a Legacy Teacher* is an inspiring call to action—showing how the wisdom of late-career teachers can be repurposed to mentor, lead, and leave a lasting impact. A must-read for sustaining school communities.

Lisa Marie Dix

Elementary Curriculum Director
Bourne Public Schools

Be a Legacy Teacher: Five Purpose-Filled Pathways to Inspire Late-Career and Retiring Educators is a rare gift for all educators. It feels like a heart-to-heart with a wise mentor who gently reminds you: “You still matter. Your voice still counts.” Through intentional self-reflection prompts, wisdom-sharing strategies, and calls to action, the book helps you not just remember your value, but *use* it. It isn’t about going back—it’s about redirecting your continued service to the profession—strategically, passionately and with deep intention. For any retired educator still feeling the spark, this is your invitation to leave a second legacy. Education still needs your voice. Thank you, Carol, for your professional generosity and sharing your voice in support of our amazing profession!

Meg Roa

Specialist, Recruitment & Retention Office,
Volusia County Schools Educational Consultant, Corwin

Retired teachers and administrators often have limited options to continue in education. *Be a Legacy Teacher* offers educational ideas for retirees: mentoring, teaching, writing, and, advising and/or consulting, with examples for each section. With its myriad of ideas, this book should be part of every school professional library.

Peggy Williams

Retired English Teacher

Carol’s inspiring words remind us that retirement isn’t the end of impact, it is a new chapter to share wisdom, nurture passion, and continue shaping lives. *Be A Legacy Teacher* honors the lasting influence of educators who are ready to turn the page, but not end the story.

Kathryn E. Shupe

Retired New Teacher Support Coordinator,
Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools

As a lifelong learner, educator and leader in mentorship, this book is a lovely reminder that “once a teacher, always a teacher”. Legacy Teachers are the core of our education system—Legacy Teachers often fill the gaps between the experienced and novice educators with their insight, bird’s eye perspective, and wisdom only gained through experience and observation. In the North Dakota statewide mentoring program (ND RISE), our Legacy Mentors are the key to ensuring our beginning

teachers are prepared, purposeful, and engaged. Carol does a beautiful job laying out strategies that speak to the *whole adult*.

Marijke Leibel

Assistant Coordinator, ND RISE

With the increasing loss of “collective wisdom” in the teaching profession when the experienced and accomplished cadre of educators retire, significant efforts must be made to preserve their legacy for the next generations of teachers. Mentoring as a legacy undertaking should be at the heart of this effort. This book provides an invaluable resource toolkit to those teachers who are passionate about imparting their knowledge, helping others grow, and leaving an important mark in education by paying purposeful attention to their own and others’ wellbeing.

Dr. Benjamin Kutsyruba

Professor, Educational Leadership, Policy,
and School Law, Queen’s University, Canada



BE A LEGACY TEACHER



“The saddest thing about US education is that we lose the wisdom of our most successful teachers when they retire.” John Dewey

This book is dedicated to John Dewey (1859–1952), an American philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer. His words inspired me to capture the wisdom of retired teachers and acknowledge them as Legacy Teachers.



BE A LEGACY TEACHER

FIVE PURPOSE-FILLED PATHWAYS
TO INSPIRE LATE-CAREER AND
RETIRING EDUCATORS

CAROL
PELLETIER
RADFORD



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About the Author



Carol Pelletier Radford is the founder of Mentoring in Action, an organization dedicated to the success of novice teachers and their mentors. She received her doctorate from the Harvard Graduate School of Education where she focused her studies on mentoring and teacher leadership. Carol is an experienced classroom teacher, university education administrator, and certified yoga instructor. She is the author of bestselling

Corwin books *Mentoring in Action: Guiding, Sharing, and Reflecting with Novice Teachers*; *The First Years Matter: Becoming an Effective Teacher*; *Teaching with Light: Ten Lessons for Finding Wisdom, Balance, and Inspiration*; and “When I Started Teaching, I Wish I Had Known”: *Weekly Wisdom for Beginning Teachers*.

Visit **mentoringinaction.com** to learn more about her books and access free podcasts, videos, and courses. You can find her near the beach in Falmouth, Massachusetts, and Venice, Florida.

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Welcome Letter to the Readers



Dear Educator Friends,

For many of us, being a teacher is part of our identity. So when we're ready to leave the classroom or our leadership role, we may be wondering "what's next?" As a former classroom teacher and teacher educator, I have dedicated my professional life to students and the teachers who teach them. I taught in an elementary classroom for more than twenty years, led teacher education student-teaching programs, designed alternative teacher preparation pathways, and created my own company Mentoring in Action because I believe we can transform education for students by supporting novice teachers and their mentors.

Many of my friends and colleagues have asked, "Why are you still working?" I have had many different responses to that question over the past ten years. At first it was because school districts asked me for help and I loved supporting them. I realized that the resources and books I had developed over the years were still relevant and useful to supporting teacher development. I found the work personally rewarding, and it kept me busy in a purposeful way. I could create my own schedule, see my family, travel, and continue to be an educator.

When I was doing some research a few years ago I came across this quote by John Dewey and it stopped me in my tracks. "One of the saddest things about US education is that the wisdom of our most successful teachers is lost when they retire."

His words inspired me to think about how teachers who are formally retired could continue to serve in some way. I see the next generation of teachers struggling, and many beginners are leaving before they even get started. So one thought led to another and the idea emerged of capturing the wisdom of retired teachers and finding ways for us to continue our service.

If you are reading this book, you are a late-career educator planning your retirement, or perhaps you are already retired and are looking for ways to reconnect with education. Our profession certainly needs an intentional collective reemergence of our passion for teaching, our successful classroom experiences, and our wisdom. Together we can influence our next generation of teachers, their students, and the educational community. As you read the ideas in these pages my intention is that you will discover ways to embrace your retirement as you keep your body, mind, and spirit actively engaged in what is most meaningful to you.

I hope this book will give you the inspiration, motivation, and practical next steps to choose to be a Legacy Teacher. We need your wisdom now more than ever.

xo

Carol

Legacy Teacher

Founder, Mentoring in Action





Introduction: Prepare for Your Legacy Teacher Journey

MY JOURNEY

I began my journey into teaching long before I entered the classroom. I was one of those teachers who always knew I wanted to teach. My elementary degree led me to my first classroom and more than twenty years teaching students. I loved it, but my heart led me to supporting student teachers who came to our school from that same college where I studied. One thing led to another, and I found myself supporting the mentors who were guiding these young professionals. Choosing to leave the classroom and lead practicum-based programs at the university level kept me inspired and allowed me to share the wisdom I had gained in the classroom. Mentors and novices needed tools to guide them through their beginning years.

My first two books *The First Years Matter: Becoming an Effective Teacher* (2016) and *Mentoring in Action: Guiding, Sharing, and Reflecting with Novice Teachers* (2017) were designed to create a common language for mentors and mentees. Working closely with the mentors and listening to



their daily challenges led me to write *Teaching with Light: Ten Lessons for Finding Wisdom, Balance, and Inspiration* (2021) where I shared my stories and other teachers' stories to offer hope and resources that could support teachers in their day-to-day practice. Teacher wisdom matters to me, and the opportunity to compile stories from practicing teachers from all over the country in *When I Started Teaching I Wish I Had Known: Weekly Wisdom for Beginning Teachers* (2023) shares that teacher magic. Many of the teachers in the book are featured on the Corwin *Teacher to Teacher* podcast which I am honored to host. Hearing their voices and their inspired stories reminds us why we chose to teach and lead programs that support teachers.



My journey away from the classroom and to a new adventure has led me to this book. *Be a Legacy Teacher* is an invitation to reflect on your journey, honor your wisdom, and choose the ways you will continue to serve.

It is a book that offers you paths to consider as your legacy journey continues.

WHO IS A LEGACY TEACHER?

Many retirees meet socially at college reunions or alumni events. Some keep connections in their school districts. There are groups of retirees who maintain their memberships with their unions and others who join volunteer groups. Many educators seek out supervision of student teachers or teaching courses at local colleges. But as far as I know retirees are on their own to choose the next step professionally.

I first introduced the concept of a Legacy Teacher in the last chapter of my book *Teaching with Light*. Several years ago as part of my keynote presentation on the topic Pay It Forward, I asked retired educators in the audience to stand. An entire row of people stood up, and I thanked them for their service and referred to them as “Legacy Teachers.” At the end of the event several approached me and shared how important it was to be recognized publicly. They shared they were all still actively attending conferences and contributing to the profession. They liked the idea of being called “Legacy Teachers” because it felt honorable. This interaction ignited my internal motivation to find a way to make this term a reality.

Legacy is often defined as the long-lasting impact of particular events or actions in a person’s life. When we think of the word *legacy*, we may think of the wisdom and influence of great teachers we have known. We may also be reminded of our influence on thousands of students who will remember us for generations to come. As educators we never know how our influence has rippled out to the world. I was cleaning up some old papers and discovered a letter from a student I had taught in fifth grade. She wrote the letter ten years after she was in my class. Her words touched me deeply as she shared what she had learned and how her experience helped her grow. This is our legacy work as teachers.

My definition for a Legacy Teacher includes someone who is formally retired from their PreK–12 school district. This includes teachers, specialists, administrators, or school leaders. A Legacy Teacher self identifies as a life-long learner who chooses to share their passion for teaching, their experience in the classroom or in leadership, and their hope for the profession. Continuing service may be through pathways like the five I am introducing in this book or other ways the Legacy Teacher chooses to support education. Experienced teachers who have walked the talk have lasting impact on students, schools, and the profession.

Universities identify retiring professors as *emeritus* so they can formally participate in the education community. I believe PreK–12 teachers deserve the same honor. I also believe that retired teachers who choose to “continue to serve” should be known as Legacy Teachers, because like emeritus professors these educators hold the knowledge of practice for PreK–12.

A Legacy Teacher Network is a visible organized group of Legacy Teachers who collaborate and share ideas for the purpose of supporting education principles and practices in their district or as part of any organization that influences education. To learn more about creating a Legacy Teacher Network, see Appendix A.

Your role as a Legacy Teacher is up to you. You choose how you would like to contribute. You may choose to identify as a Legacy Teacher and act as an individual and never be part of a network. This concept is unfolding, and you will be part of the transformation from retired educator to Legacy Teacher.

WHY BECOME A LEGACY TEACHER?

I had mixed emotions when I thought about retirement. I was ready to leave the full-time challenges, the duties, and some of the people, and yet I wanted to participate professionally with other educators in some way. I searched for activities that would engage me personally and even tried playing mahjong! But after a few months I was bored, restless, and in need of a professional connection. An informal conversation with another retired educator led to our co-creation of my company Mentoring in Action and I felt revitalized. Why did I jump back into a routine and choose an education-related activity for myself when I had no requirement to do so? I guess that internal teacher in me just wanted to continue to play with other educators.

I also had a choice about when I would work and what I wanted to do. I felt healthier, happier, and noticed I really do like a routine and a schedule for my week. I could pencil in days off and choose when to work. My love of teaching could be shared with others on my time.

Research shows that there are multiple benefits to continuing to work after retirement, ranging from financial to cognitive to social (Community Senior Life, n.d.). A paying position can offer us a financial boost that can support travel or provide needed income. Not all of us want or need that kind of pressure so volunteering is often a better option for our mental health. Retiring can leave us bored when we are used to moving at high speeds and then there is nothing to do. Just exploring new opportunities can be inspiring. Plus it supports our brain health and reduces the risk of cognitive decline.

As a Legacy Teacher who is “choosing” to contribute, you get to decide how often you want to work or volunteer. The varied benefits contribute to your overall health and sense of purpose.

HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED

This book is organized into three parts with ten chapters in total. In Part I, Chapters 1–3 will ground you and help clarify what you are looking for as you become a Legacy Teacher. In Part II, Chapters 4–8 will share practical paths to consider, as you plan to continue your service. And in Part III, Chapters 9–10 will allow you to review what you have read and intentionally choose a next step. For those of you who enjoy additional resources, the end of each chapter offers ways to resources to Learn More. You will also find more resources on the companion website. Be sure to review the Appendices before you begin to see how you can access the companion website documents as you read the book. More on each part and chapter is detailed below.



Scan the QR code to view the companion website materials that go along with this book.
qrs.ly/zagr8pb

Part I: Transitioning from Your Full-Time Career introduces you to the big idea of the book, which is extending the developmental continuum for retired educators who I call Legacy Teachers. I propose this idea as a way to formally recognize these educators as teachers who have wisdom to offer the profession.

It is important to read these three chapters first and get yourself grounded and focused on what is most important to you. Although it may be tempting to dive in and see what the opportunities are in Chapters 4–8, your deepest reflection will be in the first three chapters, and this reflection is essential. Think of it as building your new house. You don’t want to start decorating the rooms before you build the foundation.

The three chapters in Part I are designed to have you slow down. As teachers we usually like to stay busy and may react to a request because we want to help. Teachers by nature are helpers. If you are planning your retirement or recently retired and are afraid you will be bored and

have nothing to do, I invite you to pause for now. As you read this book, you will get to decide what you will do next from a place of reflection.

Chapter 1: Begin Your Journey in Your Heart invites you to begin your journey to becoming a Legacy Teacher through reflection. You will begin by acknowledging how you began your career, listening to your inner voice, and being curious.

Chapter 2: Look Back ~ Look Forward offers an opportunity for you to reflect on where you have been and who you would like to be as you look ahead. This includes honoring the legacy you bring and celebrating your journey.

Chapter 3: Maintain Your Balance is an important chapter because we need to find ways to be in the moment and savor the experiences at this stage of our life. Think of this time of your life as being on your chosen path.

At the end of Part I, you will have time to Pause and Reflect. You will review what you have written and clarify your thoughts. This will help you assess the opportunities that most align with your needs and desires.

Part II: Continuing Service Opportunities: Explore Your Options includes five pathways organized by chapters:

- **MENTOR (Chapter 4)**
- **TEACH (Chapter 5)**
- **WRITE (Chapter 6)**
- **CONSULT (Chapter 7)**
- **INFLUENCE (Chapter 8)**

The goal in this book is to encourage you to contribute to the profession in an educational role or in a role that influences education. These topics are not all inclusive, and I chose them because I had some experience in these areas or educators had suggested them to me. The voices of five Legacy Teachers are also featured in each chapter.

You may choose to skim and scan to find the topics that speak to you, or you may choose to read the chapters in order. Be curious and see if there

is an opportunity you hadn't thought about that is of interest to you now. Be thinking about the level of commitment it would take from you as you review each opportunity presented. You may also think about whether you prefer to work independently or are seeking connections with other educators. You will also need to address whether you need financial compensation or would prefer to be a volunteer. All of these lenses will influence your decisions.

Part III: Moving Forward: Take Action! includes Chapters 9 and 10. This is the time to review all of your reflections, see what stood out to you, and decide what you will actually do. Chapter 9 supports you in creating an Action Plan, and Chapter 10 offers closing thoughts.

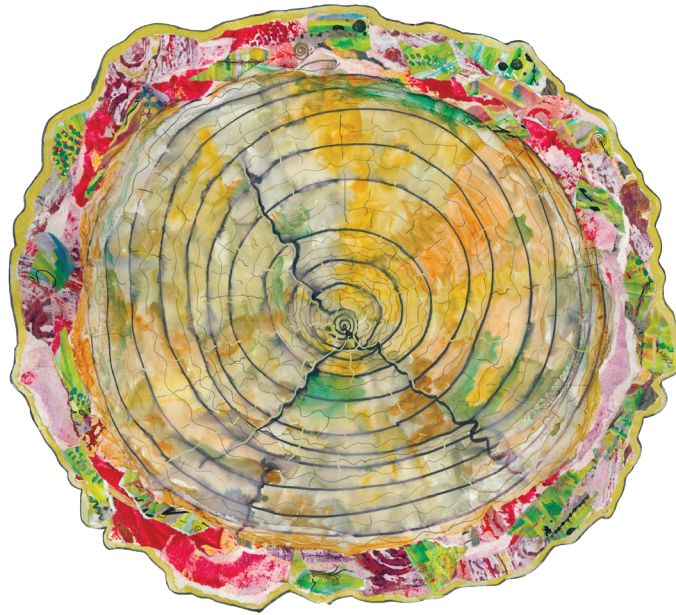
EMBRACE ART, POETRY, AND VOICE

I intentionally created the art for this book knowing that art images reach readers in a way that words cannot. I learned this from the reactions to the art in my 2021 book *Teaching with Light*. The pieces of art in that book actually came before the stories were written and helped me to uncover what I wanted to say and how to say it.

My fascination with trees continues to grow over time and is represented through the art in this book. I resonate with the stability that trees and forests provide us. In this book, the images of branches, tree roots, the trunk of the tree, and the rings of a tree relate to the ideas of growth and wisdom.

In fact, the tree ring was my inspiration for this book before I wrote a word. I see the rings of a tree as layers of wisdom over time. If you look closely at a tree ring you see it is not perfect, there are scars and marks embedded in the tree itself. We have those marks in our experiences as educators. I believe our imperfections and obstacles help us to find our wisdom. These shifts in the size of the ring are the pivotal moments when we changed direction or made a decision.





I used watercolor, original paper designs to collage the edge and black pen to ensure the image was not perfect. That central core of the tree is that moment we chose to teach. The tree roots, the trunk, and the branches illustrate our values, our ability to reach out, and our strength.

Poetry is included in every chapter as a way to engage with the chapter message from a deeper perspective. My relationship with poetry began in the eighth grade when my teacher required us to memorize and recite a poem in front of the class. I was not happy to do this at the time and yet the poem by Robert Frost, “The Road Not Taken,” has become a guiding message throughout my life and I can still recite it! Poetry speaks to us in a different language. Words are powerful messengers. If you want to learn more about how poetry can influence you, I recommend the book by Kim Rosen *Saved By a Poem* (2009).



Reading the poems out loud offers us a physical experience. Our tone, our measured words, the cadence of our voice influences the message and how we feel it. Near each poem, you will see a QR code that allows you to hear the poem read aloud to hear the poet's or my interpretation. I encourage you to read each one aloud to feel your interpretation.

If you are wondering why these poems, I would say they chose me. I invite you to look around you and see how poetry is infused in your life. If you are a poet, I invite you to express yourself and write poems in your journal throughout this process.

The book is designed to engage you through inspirational messages sprinkled throughout, colorful art, and journal prompts to reveal your deepest insights. I invite you to dive in and use this as a tool that will be a true companion as you move through this new stage of life.

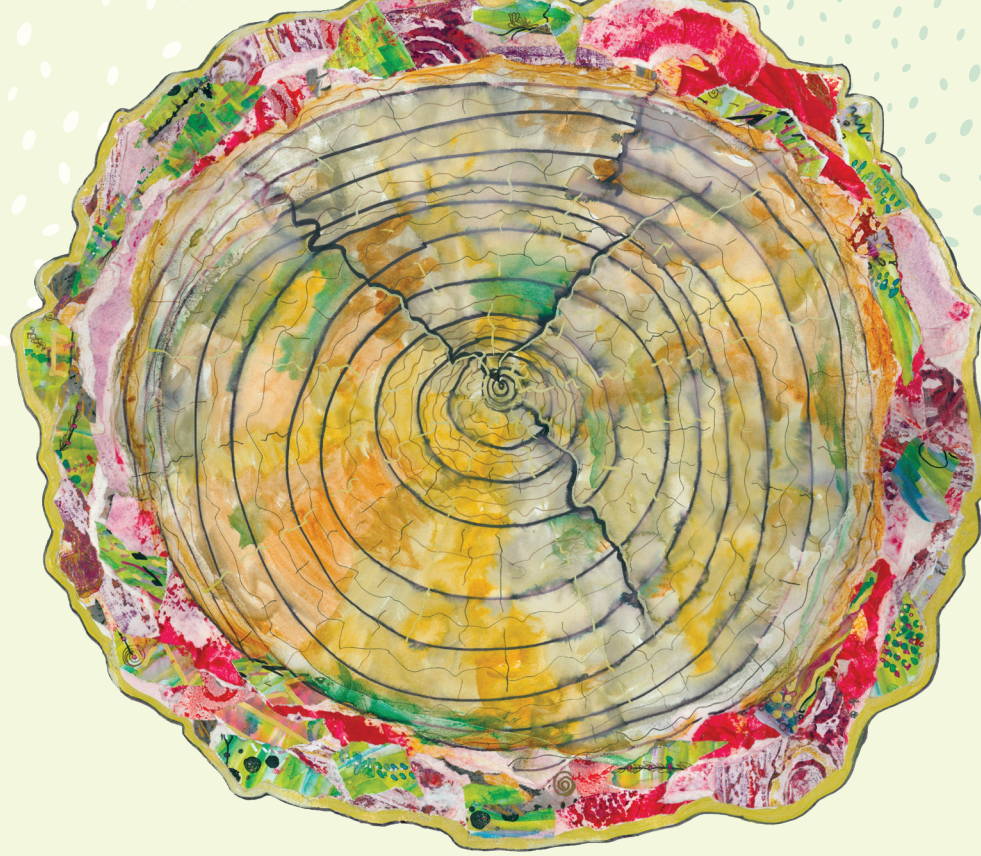






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PART ONE

Transitioning
from Your
Full-Time Career

WHAT'S YOUR WHY?

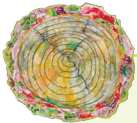
Congratulations! You have achieved and accomplished a noble task. You are getting ready to retire or perhaps have already retired! Teaching in a classroom or leading a school or district is no easy role. You dedicated your career to this profession, and now it is time for you to decide what to do next.

In my experience as an educator, I have observed two groups of teachers near retirement: one group can't get out fast enough and never wants to come back, and the other group has some energy and inspiration but doesn't know what to do next. This guide is one way to explore some of the options that are available to experienced education professionals.

Select a journal and a favorite pen to record your responses to the prompts in the In Your Journal box throughout the book. If you prefer typing, a Legacy Teacher Journal is available on the companion website. These questions and your responses will guide you as you read through the chapters.



Scan the QR code to access the journal
and other companion website materials.
qrs.ly/5pgr8pe



In Your Journal

Select one or more of these prompts to begin your journey.

- What are you feeling right now?
- Do you need to continue to work for financial reasons? Full time? Part time?
- Do you want to volunteer instead of working?
- Are you ready to try a new educational experience?
- Is there something in education you have always wanted to do?

Retirement can be a very emotional experience. Allow yourself to feel. Author Marc Brackett shares in his book *Permission to Feel* (2019) that our emotions shape how we think, behave, and respond to life situations around us. They are not just simple reactions. Acknowledging that this

is a time of change is an important part of your transition. Retiring is an emotional experience. You will have your own internal dialogue reflecting what you are feeling and have emotional responses to input from your colleagues, family, and community.

Don't bury your feelings. Allow yourself to feel and sit with any sadness or grief that comes up as you think about leaving your career. Or perhaps you are jumping for joy! You are so happy that you have completed your job and can now do what you want to do. Embrace those feelings too. Write in your journal, draw your emotions, and capture whatever you are feeling right now. You will want to reread your thoughts at the end of the book. They will contain valuable insights that you can use to create your Action Plan in Part III.

EXPANDING THE CONTINUUM

I first learned about the stages of teacher development through my mentor training with Ellen Moir, one of the founders of The New Teacher Center in Santa Cruz. I was in the beginning stages of becoming a mentor trainer myself and was fortunate to be sent to California to learn from this group of innovators. Ellen and her colleagues at The New Teacher Center proposed a Developmental Continuum of Teacher Abilities with five levels of development (New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz, n.d.).

This continuum highlights the key elements of teacher practice through the development of knowledge and skills needed as we gain more experience. I used this Continuum of Teacher Abilities in all of my mentor work with preservice and in-service teachers, as well as in my 2017 book *Mentoring in Action: Guiding, Sharing, and Reflecting with Novice Teachers*, for which Ellen wrote the foreword.

This continuum illustrates our career over time described through our abilities. We launch into our professional roles as preservice beginners. At this beginning stage we were emerging as professionals. Remember how you felt? We began our careers as student teachers practicing how to teach if you were lucky. Some of you may have just jumped into a classroom and never had a preservice experience! I was so nervous every time I stood in front of students. Until one day I wasn't. That day I shifted to a feeling of confidence when my legs didn't shake as much when someone

was observing me teach. I knew then that I was developing my skills and would be ready for my first classroom. There are many pathways to teaching now. The alternative routes offer career changers other options for entering the profession, yet they may eliminate the preservice practice experience.

When we secure a full-time position in a school we continue our learning through our in-service employment years. This is the stage of the continuum where we spend time applying what we learned in preservice education courses and student teaching (if we are lucky) and integrate and innovate in our classrooms. We are official teachers of record who are being paid a salary and have benefits. We are developing our skills and practices as we teach and continue to learn. Districts offer us professional development, and we modify curriculum to meet the needs of our students. Many of us enroll in advanced degree programs. Some educators earn new certificates and branch out to teach specialized areas like reading or counseling. Others opt to leave the classroom for leadership roles or administrative positions.

This in-service stage is our career. It could last for twenty years, or some teachers teach for forty years or more. Our abilities are honed during this time and are the basis of practitioner knowledge. I would add this is where we develop our wisdom. This is the teacher magic we learn by being in a school. These “deep smarts” (Islas, 2011, refers to the book *Deep Smarts*, Dorothy Leonard and Walter Swap, 2005) are lost when experienced teachers retire. The authors suggest to preserve “deep smarts” the leadership must be intentional about facilitating the transfer of knowledge before educators retire. This transfer could continue on with Legacy Teachers after retirement.

I propose a new stage be added to the existing continuum. By adding Continuing Service we ensure our most successful teachers are visible to the profession. This visibility offers retirees an opportunity to be recognized as wisdom holders who have abilities that they can continue to share in a variety of ways. Contributions may include mentoring, teaching, writing, consulting, and influencing as I discuss later in this book or the service may relate to a particular need in a district or educational organization.

By expanding the continuum introduced by the New Teacher Center, we not only honor the language of teaching abilities—beginning, emerging,

applying, integrating, and innovating—we recognize that sharing wisdom is an important ability and one that is crucial to sustaining our profession.

The Expanding the Developmental Continuum of Abilities for Educators table shows an expanded continuum with the continuing service stage added.

Expanding the Developmental Continuum of Abilities for Educators

Preservice Abilities	In-service Abilities	New! Continuing Service Abilities
<p>Beginning ~ Emerging</p> <p>Learning how to teach. Practicum, student teaching, internships, professional learning schools, etc. Schools of education or alternative pathways and routes to becoming a certified teacher.</p>	<p>Applying ~ Integrating ~ Innovating</p> <p>Employed by a school district as a certified teacher. Engage in professional development options offered by the district to continue learning as a teacher. Earning higher level degrees and certifications through Colleges of Education pathways, e.g., masters, doctorate, certificates of advanced studies, reading certifications.</p>	<p>Sharing wisdom through Mentoring ~ Teaching ~ Writing ~ Influencing ~ Consulting</p> <p>Legacy Teachers: Retired educators who choose to continue to learn and contribute by sharing their wisdom.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to support their district - to influence the professional knowledge base - to influence public policies and practices <p>Legacy Teacher Network: A visible organized group of Legacy Teachers who collaborate and share ideas for the purpose of enhancing the education profession.</p>

Source: Information from The New Teacher Center's *Developmental Continuum of Teacher Abilities*

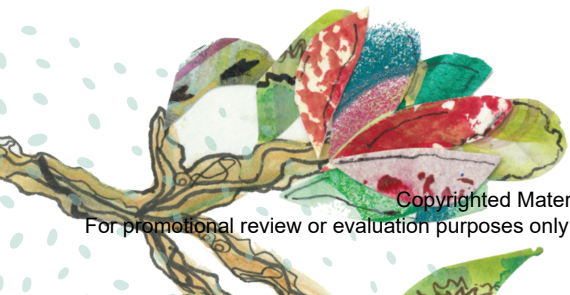
This continuing stage is not about busy work. I am suggesting the profession recognize the wisdom of our most successful teachers so we can intentionally share what we have learned—not only with beginning and in-service educators but with public policy leaders and other stakeholders interested in supporting our profession. This distinction as Legacy Teachers can ripple even further when we network to collaborate and share what works with aspiring educators.

You may have had to make decisions during your preservice and in-service stages that took you away from your own dreams. Now is the time to stay the course as an educator and contribute in ways that are meaningful to you. I am encouraging you to slow down and intentionally use this beginning part of the book to center yourself and truly ask why you want to continue to serve.

THE PROFESSION NEEDS YOU NOW

There is no secret that teachers are leaving the profession in droves, especially in hard-to-staff schools. When mentors and experienced teachers leave, we enter what I call a “wisdom gap.” Have you ever visited a school and the most senior teacher has fewer than ten years’ experience? I have, and there is a gap in experience, practical strategies, and pedagogical knowledge. It felt like I had gone back in time and everyone at the school was reinventing the wheel.

Some would say, so be it. Let nature take its course. When all the experience is gone, we will start fresh with a new generation of teachers. Maybe we are supposed to lose all of that wisdom and experience and recreate it all from scratch. I am not one of those people. It’s not that I think everything in schools is working perfectly. It’s not. It’s just that there’s so many successful practices that are not being shared. The teacher magic is hidden away in successful teachers’ classrooms. They take it with them, and then it is gone.



We can't ignore the stress educators face when we are talking about ways to support schools; in fact, research has shown that teaching is one of the most stressful occupations in the United States (Greenberg et al., 2016). As late-career educators and retirees, we need to think about how we can share how we successfully managed a career in education. That's what becoming a Legacy Teacher is all about. How did we manage to keep that joy and still address the challenges schools face today?

And yes we might need to modify some of the beliefs we have carried with us. Everything we have done in the past should not move forward. But I am confident that experienced Legacy Teachers who want to bring joy back to the profession can sort that out. We just need to put wisdom from experienced educators into the mix of conversations. Right now I don't see that happening in a systematic way. By participating as an individual Legacy Teacher or being part of a Legacy Teacher Network (more on that in Chapter 10), we get to stay in the game.

So how do we get on the playing field? How do we capture that wisdom, encourage teachers to be brave enough to share it, and have schools welcome this experience? We do it in small steps. We begin in schools and organizations who support teachers. Small steps lead to big changes in school culture. This book is about you seeing that one small, first step or maybe a big first step can make a difference.

As we each find that initial step, more teachers will join us. Soon we will create a ripple and then will have a tidal wave of sharing professionals. All these educators sharing their wisdom to support the next generation.



These are the words
that stand out to me.

*It is the sage
who has
succeeded.*

What are the words
that speak to you?

If Not You, Who?

William Martin



Listen: Scan the QR code to hear me read this poem. I invite you to read the poem out loud to feel the energy of the words. qrs.ly/gkgr8q1

A youth may have ambitious goals
but the sage has no need for ambition.
A youth strives for perfection
but the sage is content with imperfection.
A youth is always on guard against loss
but the sage has let go already.

Therefore despite the apparent advantages of youth,
it is the sage who shows the way.
It is the sage who can be trusted.
It is the sage who is the example to follow.
It is the sage who has succeeded.

You cannot fulfill your destiny
by hanging on to the qualities of youth.
If you do not display an alternative to blind
ambition,
our world will be depleted beyond recovery.
If you do not live with acceptance and grace,
our world will be consumed by the fires of hate.
If you do not become a sage,
from where will guidance come?
If not you,
who?



“If Not You, Who?” from *The Sage’s Tao Te Ching* by William Martin © 2000, 2010 All rights reserved, used with permission, permissions info courtesy of The Moulton Agency, moultonlit@aol.com.

This poem is a reminder that you are not at the end of your journey. What is calling to you? How will you respond?



Chapter 1

Begin Your Journey in Your Heart

Listen to your heart and follow its guidance.

These are the words
that stand out to me.

For Thinkers:

start listening

For Feelers:

*exhilaration of
newness is still
within you*

What are the words
that speak to you?

from *Self-Love Poetry*: *For Thinkers & Feelers*

Melody Godfred



Listen: Scan the QR code to hear the poet Melody Godfred read this poem. I invite you to read the poem out loud to feel the energy of the words.
qrs.ly/xxgr8qa

For Left-Brain Thinkers

The feeling you get
when you start listening
to your inner voice
instead of shushing it.

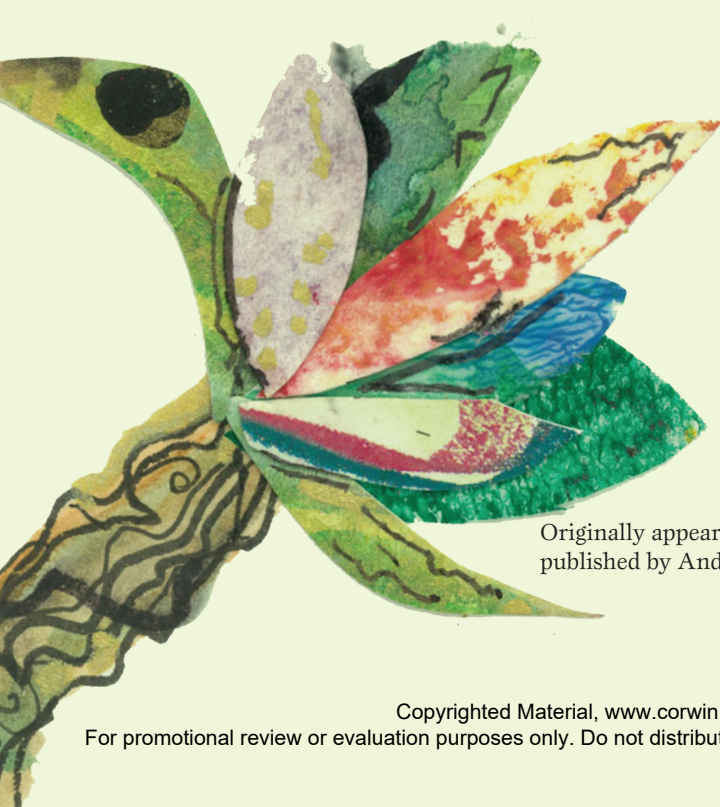
For Right-Brain Feelers

Remember how it felt to
start something new,
to feel yourself growing,
learning, becoming
stronger, sharper,
more powerful.

Remember thinking,
“How did I even live before?”
The newness so deeply
Embedded in the very
essence of who you are.

Consider that while you
may now feel life is
monotonous, dull, a hum
of repeated tasks and emotions,
that potential for experiencing the
exhilaration of newness
is still within you. . .
all you have to do is claim it.

Originally appeared in *Self-Love Poetry* © 2021 Melody Godfred,
published by Andrews McMeel.



This is the beginning of your journey into exploring the invitation to choose to be a Legacy Teacher. The focus of this chapter is on how you listen to yourself and use your inner voice to guide you. There are three ways to begin this process. The first step begins with acknowledging your journey into teaching. Looking back on why you chose to teach and honoring the many steps you have taken to be where you are today. Next we explore how you know your heart is talking to you. I will share my experience in following my heart and encourage you to practice heart-centered listening. The chapter ends with ways to stay curious and creative as you discover new pathways that you may explore. The goal for this chapter is to step back and see the journey you have been on so far and learn how you make decisions.

HOW DO YOU LISTEN?

When I wrote *Teaching with Light: Ten Lessons for Finding Wisdom, Balance, and Inspiration*, I revealed my most inner stories when I faced personal and professional challenges. I also shared how I faced them to stay in education. You have stories too, and they have made you who you are as an educator. We want to not only survive in this profession—we want to also thrive and experience some joy! There are lots of emotions to experience in the human being business. Some of them are positive like humor, hope, and joy. Others are challenging like confusion, anxiety, or anger.

An important part in choosing next steps is about your willingness to be open to new ideas, opportunities, and experiences you may never have imagined. Stay curious and don't eliminate options just because you have never done them before. Just like we tell our beginning teachers to take risks, this is the time for you to be brave. After all what do you have to lose? You are retiring!

ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR JOURNEY INTO TEACHING

Let's begin at your beginning. Why did you choose to become a teacher? What's your story? Sometimes we forget why we chose this path because it happened so long ago. Take some time to recognize your initial steps, the people who supported you, and the obstacles you faced. Acknowledge what you accomplished to choose this path and to sustain a career as an educator. Use these memories to listen through your heart.

My story, *When The Guidance Counselor Told Me No!*, may resonate with you or your story may be entirely different. I have always wanted to be a teacher. So when I met with my high school counselor who told me my standardized test scores were too low for the local teachers' college I was devastated. My grades were stellar, and I had a strong record of school participation, but she explained that these were the rules for admission. I was frustrated and embarrassed to learn that my life's dream could be ruined by a rule that didn't show my intelligence or my passion for teaching.

When I reflect on the experience I see how determined I was to override this decision. My mother became my biggest advocate. She encouraged me to retake the tests and helped me to write a letter to the admissions committee sharing who I was and why I wanted to be a teacher. Taking these actions led to my acceptance into the college program.

The lesson in this story is to use our challenges to recognize our own resilience and notice how we can continue to move forward in spite of obstacles. If I hadn't been determined to follow my heart I would never have become a teacher and would not be writing this book.



Listen: Scan the QR code to listen to my story "When the Guidance Counselor Told Me No" on the *Teaching with Light* podcast.
qrs.ly/33gr8zq

As you listen to my story, notice the values that guided me through the part of my life when I felt hopeless and uncertain. My mother and my personal strength to become a teacher moved me to take actions that shifted the direction of my life. These actions came from deep within me as strengths I didn't even know I had. Your story matters. As you start on your Legacy Teacher journey, take some time to reflect on your entry into this profession and the strengths you used to navigate the beginning years. We are all grounded in personal values from our families of origin or our life experiences. Our qualities and values are reflected in our actions and choices.

I see the roots of the tree as grounding us in what is most important. These values are the source of our decisions and they influence the ways in which we see the world. As you look at the image of the tree roots on the next page and read the values, notice which ones guide you? What values would you add that aren't here?



By thinking about our beginnings, our roots, where we came from we acknowledge and honor the complexities of our teaching experience and how it relates to who we truly are as human beings.

FIND YOUR INNER GUIDE THROUGH YOUR HEART

What does it actually mean to follow your heart? To me it is the peaceful feeling I get when I know I have made the right decision. I have a sense of confidence and balance. It just feels right. Some might call it a gut feeling or our intuition. I do believe inner guidance helps me when I need to make difficult decisions.

One way I find my inner voice is to write my thoughts in a journal. I prefer handwriting for this process because there is just something about the pen to paper that flows. Peter Elbow (1973) calls this process free writing. Some people call it automatic writing, and another teacher I met called it dialogue journaling.

To try out free writing, find a period of uninterrupted time, perhaps 10 or 15 minutes, and sit with your pen and journal. Write about anything that's on your mind or in your heart. Don't worry about your word choice or spelling. Just get your thoughts down.

Moving my pen quickly across the paper without worrying about punctuation allows my mind to be free and that tiny voice inside gets to emerge. It's fun. Instead of doing a pros and cons list when I am stuck, I ask myself a question and then I just write the answer. Sometimes I begin my day with the process, just to get started on what I should focus on. It is different from a diary where you record what you did during

a day, it is more like an internal compass leading you in a direction. Simply write a question and then take a deep breath and write your response in a free-flowing way.

Elizabeth Gilbert, in her Substack, *Letters From Love* (n.d.) encourages her followers to respond to a prompt like, “What message would love have for me today?” Receiving a message from love each morning ensures we start off on a positive note.

I have used a process like this in my workshops with educators, and I often get the question, “How will I know if it is my voice, the voice I am supposed to listen to?” I always respond with the words from one of my mentors. The voice of criticism, judgment, hurt, and doubt is NOT the voice of your heart. You know it is the right voice if it is kind, compassionate, and loving. You feel balanced and at ease with the words that you write. This is your heart talking. I believe, knowing what our hearts are saying to us allows us to be clearer about next steps so we can make better decisions and choose paths that feel right for us on our Legacy Teacher journey.

BE CURIOUS AND CREATIVE

My experience of being curious emerged during my yoga teacher training more than ten years ago. I hadn’t really thought about being curious much before that. I was a “doer” and used that energy to create things in my classroom for my students and lead workshops for teachers. In mid-career, I expanded my “doingness” to teacher development and writing, presenting and leading a student-teaching program in a school of education. I was interested most in completing tasks and checking things off my list!

In our yoga classes, the instructor kept referring to the beginner’s mind and asked us to be curious when we were holding a pose or sitting in meditation. I wasn’t sure what that meant! Now I understand that being curious is allowing my feelings and questions to show up. I might ask myself “why I am feeling a certain way right now or what is this pose saying to me?” Keeping an open mind, a willingness to move my body in ways to discover what feels good instead of just copying the instructor

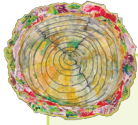
and moving in a prescribed way. After hundreds of hours of practice I could listen to my own body and see what worked for me. I learned what it felt like to be and breathe without judgment. It is a continuous practice.

This new perspective and emergence of “being” in place of doing was new to me. Calming that monkey mind was not easy, but when I allowed myself to see my thoughts and just be with them I felt a shift in my physical body. I was learning how to breathe and be still. Originally I had entered this yoga teacher training because I didn’t want to injure myself in any yoga classes I might enroll in. When I began the program I considered perhaps becoming a yoga instructor myself. I was retired and unsure of next steps, and this could be an option completely different from my career in education.

Participating in this 200-hour training gave me the opportunity to practice curiosity and what it feels like to be in the present moment. This exploration led me to think that mindfulness practices could be used by all educators and be part of a mentoring program I would create. Maybe I wasn’t done with education after all. Perhaps my next chapter would include what I was learning and my beginner’s mind would take me into new territory.

About the same time I was fully participating in this program this happened. I met a colleague, Janet, at a conference and of course the typical question came up, “What are you doing now that you are retired?” I responded that I was exploring becoming a yoga teacher and hadn’t made any definite plans yet. Then she asked the defining question, “If you could do anything in education what would you do?” It stopped me in my tracks, and immediately a voice in me responded very clearly, “I would offer an online course for graduate credit to help teachers become qualified mentors.” Her enthusiastic response was, “I can help you do that.” The rest is history. I reached out to some trusted retired colleagues, designed a plan that integrated mindfulness into mentoring practices, and went on to found my own business *Mentoring in Action*.

Because I was in a space of listening with curiosity, this new vision could materialize and take the form of a company. I didn’t know how to start a business or what to do next. I was in the process of creating so I just let it flow.



In Your Journal

Select one or more prompts to complete. As you write about these prompts, proceed with curiosity, rather than judgment.

- Why did you choose to become a teacher?
- What are your root strengths and values?
- Using Liz Gilbert's process, what message from love would you like to hear?
- Who can help you as you think about next steps?
- If you could do anything in education what would you do?

Since my retirement I have been more curious and open to my creativity. I have immersed myself in abstract art, collage, photography, and all kinds of creative experiences that just feel good to do. I participate in art groups and share art ideas with friends. I make cards and bookmarks to give away and sell. I enjoy being in the moment with this new way of expressing myself.

Why am I sharing all of this with you? I share these stories because I thought I was going to leave education. I didn't know what to do next when I retired. There was no road map for me. But because I learned to listen and because my colleague asked me a question that moved me, I was able to find my path. I have celebrated ten years with Mentoring in Action, and our team has supported hundreds of mentors. There were many synchronicities during these last ten years, and my heart continues to guide me.

My message to you is to find your still place, whether it be yoga, meditation, prayer, walking, running, art, or writing in your journal. Then just listen. Now is not the time for busy work. Now is the time for imagining, exploring, and reflecting—by going deep, finding the path to live your dreams.



