

THE TEACHER TRAP And How I CAN Break Free

Introduction

The perception is that the current state of education in America is horrendous. There are so many causes and contributing factors to the mess that it's almost impossible to list them all. Since 1988, I have been traveling all over this country working with teachers, administrators, and the private sector, and I have seen some incredibly bad situations. I have also seen some incredible success stories.

I began my professional career as an educator. I've been a teacher, coach, and a high school administrator. I'm also a parent trying to raise four children in the most challenging educational environment in the history of our nation. I know first hand about the pressures and problems that face today's children and the educators who attempt to teach them. I know about them because I have lived them. I know what it feels like as a teacher to counsel a child who does not understand why his father abuses his mother. As a coach, I have experienced seeing a child's heartbreak in my office because his mother had a different man in the house three times a week. As an administrator, I know the fear of receiving a bomb threat at school, and having to place 1200 students in the parking lot during the blistering hot weather in August. I can still feel the frustration of having to wait more than an hour for a parent to come get his child after an out-of-town basketball game, and, when he got there, the parent was drunk or high on drugs. I can vividly recall the time that I had to physically take a knife away from a boy who was about to use it on a girl. I can still feel the horror I experienced in taking a gun away from a boy who threatened to kill a teacher friend of mine the next period. Although it has been several years ago, I still am reminded of the time I gave CPR to a 65-year-old traveling salesman who dropped to the floor outside my office at school and later died of a massive stroke. Yes, I have been there and done that. *The Teacher Trap* is a book about the things I've learned from my experience, and it offers a practical solution for the real goal of education: Preparing young people for life!

Part of this book will focus on the problems that face American educators, just to demonstrate how difficult these problems are. There are five major players in the educational puzzle: The Student, The Parent, The Teacher, The Administrator, and The Government. Take a close look at this list and tell me who is in the middle? It appears to be the teacher. Now you know why I call this book *The Teacher Trap*. The teacher is trapped in the middle of conflicting perceptions and motivations. Students, parents, administrators, and government agencies all have perceptions about what the problems of education are. Unfortunately, each group has different solutions for those problems and many of the solutions can't be reconciled.

Here are 12 of the most popular perceived solutions:

1. Vouchers
2. Hire better teachers
3. Hire more teachers
4. Fire incompetent teachers
5. Hire better administrators
6. Hire more administrators
7. Fire incompetent administrators
8. More government involvement
9. Less government involvement
10. Get Parents more involved
11. Get troublesome parents out of the way
12. Put more discipline in the classroom

The first part of *The Teacher Trap* will explore the problems, perceptions, and proposed solutions in some detail. I do it only to demonstrate how complicated it will be to solve all the problems of modern education. The sad part is that while adults try to find political, social, and economic solutions for the problems of education, there are millions of children being brought along with sub-standard skills who will be unprepared to compete in a high-tech world. The real point of *The Teacher Trap* is that children must be educated and some kind of solution must be found NOW! The teacher is trapped in the middle of many opposing forces yet must still do the job. The teacher is trapped in the middle but is still the soldier on the frontline of education. Regardless of what politicians and parents do to improve the situation, teachers have to work with what they have today.

The Teacher Trap is written for teachers who know they have a difficult challenge and still accept the responsibility of being great teachers. There are thousands of teachers who still believe in the educational process and are committed to providing a quality education. These teachers are the real American heroes, and because I had a few of these, I am able to read, write and do math. *The Teacher Trap* provides a simple solution for teachers to be difference-makers in the lives of their students.

We've all heard the analogy about why it's more important to teach people to fish than to give them a fish. If you give them a fish, you feed them for a day. If you teach them how to fish, you feed them for a lifetime. The solution I am presenting in *The Teacher Trap* is designed to help kids learn how to fish for a lifetime. I know from experience that kids who are motivated and have been taught some basic principles of character are able to rise above their circumstances and be successful. *The Teacher Trap* will present absolute proof of this truth by providing the statistical facts and actual case histories that back it up.

The Teacher Trap will provide a simple alternative plan that teachers can use in spite of being trapped in what appears to be a no-win situation. There is a way a dedicated teacher can rise above the fray and accomplish the most important objective: Preparing the child for life. *The Teacher Trap* provides an alternative method for accomplishing this goal.