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Radhika Iyengar · Apr 29 · 3 min read



# Reflections from a highschool science teacher



Author: William Bertolotti, Science Teacher, Plainedge Highschool.

Hello everyone, my name is Will Bertolotti. It's important to stress the fact that teachers do not teach facts; we teach people. We embrace the responsibility for fostering the intellectual, emotional, and social growth of human beings. I have been guiding high-school students for the past 12 years as a social science research and psychology teacher. I am fortunate to teach in a district where the community, teachers, and administration are united behind ensuring the success of our students. Furthermore, several years ago I volunteered with an educational not for profit that used student-oriented experiential learning centered on the UN SDGs and it led to a significant paradigm shift in my teaching philosophy. As a teacher, I am still learning -- but I put some thought into the purpose of education and I am eager to share the mindset of a teacher to the students of the world.

We need you, the students, to know -- that you embody our hope and collective investment for a future. That your efforts are cherished and your talents acknowledged as our community's greatest resource. That your youthful frustrations and restlessness are the fuel for future change and innovation. You have a place at the communal table and in time you will control the fate of our planet. Some time ago, we as a society chose to forget that we all live on borrowed time -- I am sorry that we pushed onto you the consequences of an unsustainable lifestyle. As your teachers we must prepare you right now and every day to survive and flourish in a world not of your own making. But your potential is latent and it is incredible.

And so, we forge them -- our future civic science leaders -- guiding them with our collective experience, supporting them so that failures are embraced as opportunities for learning and growth, empowering them with lessons in resilience, knowledge, and wisdom, and tempering them with the guiding spirit of integrity and compassion. Mentorships with academia, government, and industry become the route of transmission for action. Experiential learning becomes the sandbox for future policy. We teach them that sustainability is compassion toward the other people in a world of limited resources -- and it is compassion towards your future self.

Why? It's the perennial question my students always ask. Why? Well, it's our fundamental purpose. Not only as teachers, but as parents, as members of a global community -- we have the responsibility to ensure that the next generation is prepared. Our true calling must be to inspire the spirit that guides their efforts, to mentor and advocate, to challenge, and to let go -- unshackle our youth from outmoded preconceptions of learning. We must open their eyes, that students don't need our permission to question -- that they themselves are the primary agents of their own growth. That learning can occur beyond the classroom, outside school hours, without adults. We need to teach them how to bridge differences and build connections -- to challenge and advocate -- to set the foundations for lasting change.

The world around us is our classroom, rich with experience, filled with challenges, and begging for solutions. We must ensure that our memory lives on in posterity as a generation of young leaders, ready to mend a broken world, to heal a wounded society, and to steer the course through an uncertain century.

Thank you very much for your time and for this opportunity to share.



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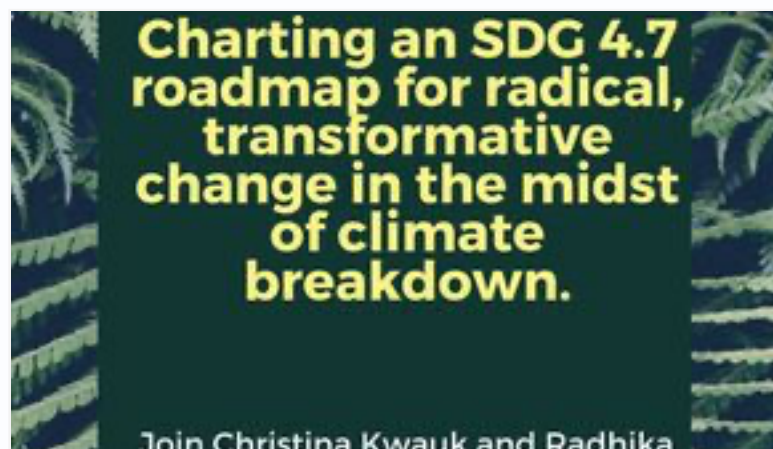
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