

Acknowledgments

In the early pages of this book, I argued that you and I are runners of a relay race in the lives of our students (see page 4); our lane is small but integral—we are necessary to make the whole complete. Without us, the finish changes.

The same can be said for this book. So many contribute to the relay race of an author's life. Authors finish work that others begin. During the long months of drafting this book, I found it impossible to comprehensively acknowledge the friends and colleagues and students and thinkers and creators who made the book in your hand. They are legion.

So, please first know that if you are reading this and you and I have met or corresponded, you blessed me; your love and earnestness helped me write this book.



There are some folks I do have to name. First, thank you to my precious family. They give most for projects like this: bearing with me in my weakness, encouraging me to give me strength. Thank you to Crystal, my wife; to Hadassah, the first of our loves, who is brave and bright; to Laura Lindsay, my early partner in reading power, who is thoughtful and strong; to Marlena, the champion of wrap hugs, who

is large of soul and kind of heart; to Dean, my total major guy, who is soft-hearted and observant; and to Charlie, our sweet dog.

And honor where it's due to my parents. They deserve honor. Lisa, Kathy, Sylvia; Big Dave, Brian, and Bill. Thank you.

I've had some standout mentors along the way, too: Jim Burke, who welcomed me into authorship; Brian Scriven, who welcomed me into education; Trent Gladstone, who welcomed me into divine apprenticeship; and Tim Knapp, who welcomed me into fatherhood. And I've got to shout out the leaders in my life who left the profession during the writing of this book. Being a good school leader is hard but critical. I've watched how buildings transform due to the vision and actions of single leaders. Mad respect to Ron B., Anne K., Diane W., Julie S., Carol S., and Jackie B., all of whom left leadership roles during the writing of this book.



I wrote the drafts of this book in lots of special places, such as Sweetlands Coffee in Rockford, Michigan; Cedar Springs Brewing Company; my classroom's back office (may it rest in peace); a small white cabin in Kentucky; Nick and Amber's basement; cafés in Vienna; that one coffee shop in Bishop, California; and Olivier's groovy camper in the Tucson desert. In a similar vein, thank you to the musicians: Vivaldi, Maverick City, Kate Bush, Arturo Sandoval, James Taylor, and Miles Davis.

I was going to try listing all the schools I visited during the writing of this book because I literally get new or clearer ideas on my work *every single time* I do so. But, because the book took so long to write, there are hundreds of schools and organizations that I would need to list. I do want to give a special shout-out, though, to schools that procured my services for extended professional development partnerships—looking at you Bethel, Maine; Hillsboro, Wisconsin; Linden, California; Broadalbin-Perth, New York; Oak Canyon JHS in Lindon, Utah; Tahoe City, California; and Arch Ford, Arkansas.



To my students, including those who got release forms signed to be photographed for this book: You all are a delight to be with, and I am so grateful that I got to be your teacher.

To two specific creative groups: First, Jake Knapp and John Zeratsky, who wrote *Make Time: How to Focus on What Matters Every Day* in 2018. I was having a heck of a time figuring out how to structure this book; I knew it wasn't going to be a typical Chapter 1–8 affair. And then one day it hit me: I could use the same structure these two used in their book. And second, the pyramid structure for the Five Key Beliefs was first proposed by designers at a firm called Dezudio. Each summer Dezudio works with Brooklyn Lab Charter School to turn the ideas of experts into visually communicative slides. I was invited to be part of this process when Brooklyn Lab was asking the question, "In light of all that's happened the past eighteen months, how can

schools best create thriving cultures in fall 2021 and meet the unique and diverse needs of each student?" My answer, of course, was equipping educators with the Five Key Beliefs methodology.

And finally, to the Teacher: "Let me build, then, my King, a beautiful thing by long obedience, by the steady progression of long choices that laid end to end will become like the stones of a pleasing path stretching to eternity" (McKelvey, 2020).

I love that language.

May this book be a small stone on a pleasing path stretching to eternity.