

## Conclusion: Healers of Souls

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During the final months of writing this book, I received an incoming call from a number I didn't know. It had a Baltimore area code.

"Hello?" I said.

"Mr. Stuart? This is Brian."

It was Brian Lawrence—a student I taught as a seventh grader. At the time he was calling me, he was twenty-seven years old.

We small-talked for a few minutes, and then Brian said, "Mr. Stuart, you're the reason I started to love reading."

Now, I love Brian's generosity in saying that. I receive his kind and good words as the treasure chests they are. What a priceless gift, to have a human being say thank you to their teacher. But I know that there are many reasons Brian came to love reading, and mastery and its delightful benefits come to those who do work with care. Actions *he* took, in other words, were the primary reason that he came to love reading. True, some of those actions were actions I required as his teacher; some of those heart shifts were aided by things that I did, all those years ago, that unbeknownst to me were cultivating the Five Key Beliefs in his heart. But ultimately *Brian* is the reason that he now finds reading to be a source of long-term flourishing. *Brian* is why words on a page usher him to experience the wholeness of what the ancient Hebrews called *shalom*.

**I believe that every subject area in our schools has the potential to enrich student lives long term.** I'm talking about art class and physical education and science and mathematics. Social studies can do this. Performing arts classes can do this. Food and nutrition can. Agriculture science can. Computer science can do this. You've never stepped foot into a secondary course not rife with long-term flourishing potential.

In other words, schools *can* make good on their unspoken promise. They can advance the long-term flourishing of young people by leading them toward mastery in disciplines and arts that they wouldn't otherwise be likely to master. And your classes, your minutes with students? They can do this; they are wrought with this earth-shaping potential.

They *do* do this. So do mine.

You cannot convince me otherwise. I know it all the way down in the marrow of my bones. It pulses with the beating of my heart.

And what I hope, colleague, is that this book has served as a small reminder to you, too, of this truth: What you teach *matters*, and your students can be motivated to care about it because student motivation is dynamic and alive, not static and fixed. Your actions alter the cosmos because they alter human life trajectories. And I hope you'll keep reminding yourself of this until you know it with a force greater than that at the bottom of the Mariana Trench or the top of Mount Everest.

And, before we close, I want to remind you of one more thing: You and I are not the only ones who think this way, colleague. We're not even close to alone. This profession is *still* filled with smart and earnest and lovely people who *desire*—who wait on the stars—to do the work that I've been describing on every page.

One of those people is named Hannah Burnam. I met Hannah at a conference we were both attending early on in the drafting process for this book. Hannah told the story then of a student of hers, Calistra, who had called Hannah "a healer of souls." I thought that was the most beautiful little phrase to describe what a teacher does when intentionally cultivating the Five Key Beliefs.

"You may not be able to heal a body like a doctor," Calistra had told Hannah, "but there is something about you that I cannot explain."

Colleague, you and I may not be able to heal their whole lives, but we *can* become the kinds of teachers about whom students say, "There's something about you that I cannot explain." We can contemplate the reality of their souls. We can partner with their wills. We can create the conditions in which the Five Key Beliefs flourish and multiply. We can help them feel accepted and cared for and safe and connected, *not just with us but also with learning in school*.

Isn't that *something*?

Go shape the cosmos.

Teaching right beside you,

DSJR