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Our Most Undervalued Resource

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Our Most Undervalued Resource

By Curtis Proctor
UCF Forum columnist
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If education truly has the power to transform lives, then it's time we put educators at the forefront of society by valuing the work they do daily, writes Curtis Proctor.

As the weather in Florida changes back to its customary form of hot and hotter, the first thing that comes to mind is: It's summertime!

For those of us with young children, we know that this means our kids will be out of school for a while and we will be searching for summer camps and activities to keep them engaged and entertained. But for a person such as myself who has spent their entire career in education, I love this time of year, not just for me but for the nearly

200,000 teachers in the State of Florida who can take a moment to breathe, relax and rejuvenate themselves from the academic year.

When I graduated from college, I had several options which I could pursue as a career. I knew that I didn't want a job that would be the same every day. I wanted to be challenged, yet make a difference in the world.

I ultimately chose a career in education and started my career working at an alternative high school serving as a teacher's aide before transitioning to a traditional high school as a health and physical education teacher.

As a child I never saw myself as a teacher, I always thought I would be a medical doctor, working in a hospital and saving lives. But once I found myself working in education, I realized that I was saving lives in a different way. I was teaching kids more than a state standard, curriculum or lesson plan but also about life and how to treat others with respect, negotiate conflict and regulate emotions.

I often think about the many students who sat in my classes and I wonder where they are now. Did they become the person that they were dreaming to be? Are they achieving their goals in life?

I like to think that I helped teach them to think critically and to weigh all their options before deciding. I often think about the many students who sat in my classes and I wonder where they are now. Did they become the person that they were dreaming to be? Are they achieving their goals in life?

Our exchange was not a one-way street; my students over the years have taught me many lessons about patience and understanding that I consider invaluable.

Teachers should be praised for the work that they do and held with the same high esteem and regard as we hold any individual who dedicates their life as a public servant and leader. Take a moment to think about your own childhood, was there a teacher in your life that went above and beyond the call of duty to motivate, inspire and encourage you?

If you could find that teacher now how would you say thank you?

But the reality of it all is that our teachers are overworked, underpaid and leaving the profession at an alarming rate. Many of our teachers use their own resources to make sure our students don't go without, work extended hours to prepare lessons, and often drain themselves while continuously pouring knowledge into our kids.

We expect teachers to do our job as parents and provide mental, emotional and physical support for our young ones as well as teach them to be global citizens.

If education truly has the power to transform lives, then it's time we put educators at the forefront of society by valuing the work they do daily.

Curtis L. Proctor is the associate director for advancement for the University of Central Florida's College of Community Innovation and Education. He can be reached at Curtis.Proctor@ucf.edu.