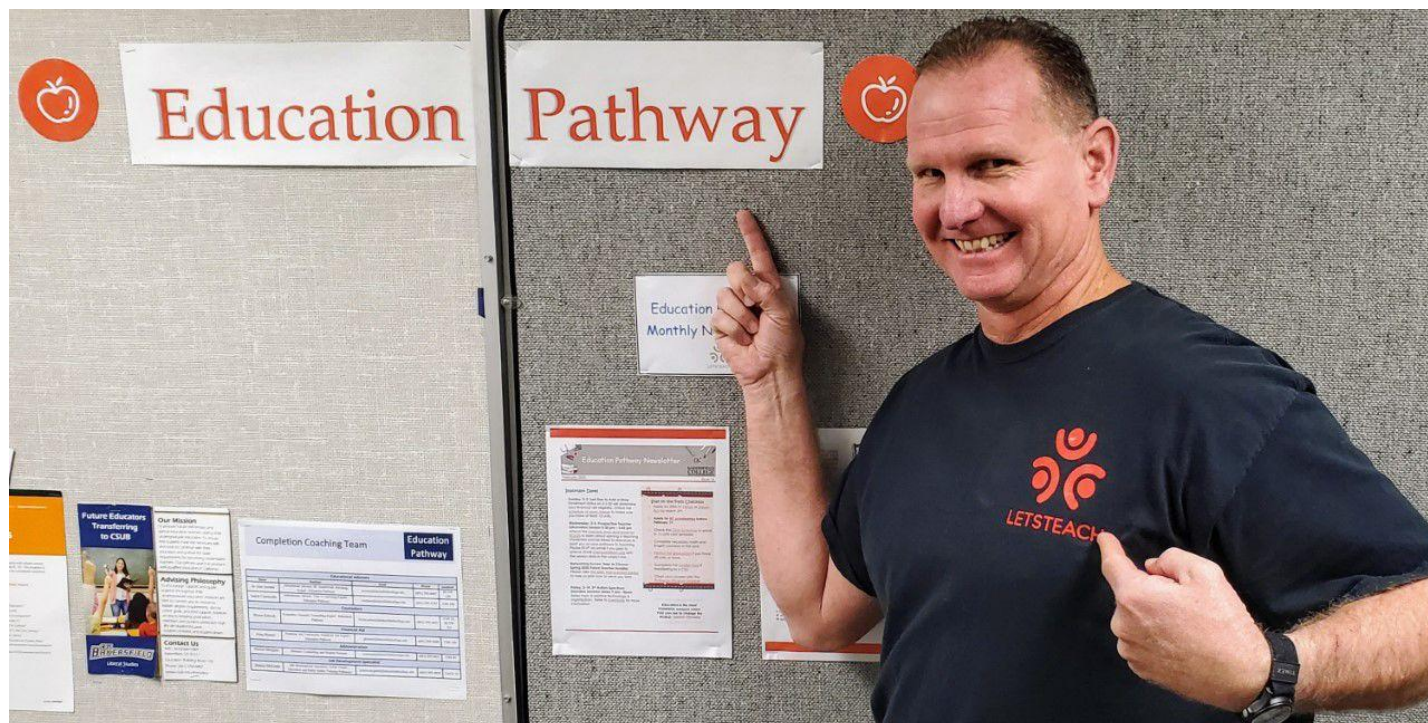


https://www.bakersfield.com/opinion/community-voices-what-it-means-to-be-a-teacher/article_671b319a-4d0a-11ea-b032-afb1dfb7a9cf.html

COMMUNITY VOICES: What it means to be a teacher

By Bill Chapman

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Bill Chapman

I was teaching in an economically disadvantaged neighborhood. Vehicles in our school parking lot were keyed or vandalized. I had a nice truck that I did not want anyone to mess with, so I hung a very large cow bone (femur) off the front bumper to “protect” the vehicle.

Two years after I started my first teaching job at Bessie Owens Elementary in the sixth grade, one of my students asked me to follow him to the bike rack after school. He had made some modifications to his bike and wanted to show me.

As school let out, I followed the boy to look at his bike. I was shocked, and tears began to well up in my eyes. Hanging off his seat was a picked-clean chicken bone. At that point, I knew I was destined to be a teacher. It is not the money, but rather those intrinsic rewards that drive us in our profession. Students learn when they feel some sort of connection with their teacher. Developing relationships with students based on humor, tough love and respect are how I approach the profession.

I have been in the education field for 31 years, and 27 of those years have been spent teaching in elementary schools across various grades. Four years ago, I was hired full-time at Bakersfield College to teach in the Academic Development Department. In 2019, ACDV was redesigned as the Education Department. I am now faculty in EDUC, teaching an introduction to teaching course.

Over the past decade, there has been a teacher and paraprofessional (teacher aides) shortage in California, especially in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics and special education fields. California would need to hire 135,000 teachers beyond their other hiring needs right now just to get us to the national average, according to CTA. Bakersfield College collaborates with local kindergarten through 16th grade institutions to meet the growing needs of the teaching profession via the Education Pathway program.

Bakersfield College's Education Pathway has grown considerably during the past few years, with more than 1,700 students currently enrolled in the Early Childhood or Elementary Teacher programs. BC offers two Associate Degree for Transfer programs in Early Childhood Development and Elementary Teacher Education. Bakersfield College also offers numerous certificates in Child Development and has a new stackable certificate program designed for career advancements for paraprofessionals. These certificates are designed to meet the needs of people who are currently employed as a classroom aide or assistant or those who are considering this career path.

As I teach these future educators, I see the enthusiasm of these students, eager to teach, eager to be in the classroom and ready to tell their own stories. Being a faculty member at Bakersfield College gives me comfort in knowing there is a coaching community invested in the completion and success of future educators.

As the legendary John Wooden once said, "You can't live a perfect day without doing something for someone who will never be able to repay you." Pursuing a career in education, such as teaching, allows you to live by this quote and make an impact in tomorrow's generation. If the education pathway is something you'd like to explore, check out BC's Education Pathway for more information:
<https://www.bakersfieldcollege.edu/academics/pathways/education>

Bill Chapman is a professor in Bakersfield College's education department.