

Successful Day

A podcast that I was listening to today reminded me of a particular positive interaction. As teachers, we have many occasions to help students in a variety of ways. If you are fortunate, helping becomes a routine part of your day as a teacher or professor to the point that you don't even think about it.

One such event, however, stands out in my mind, neither because of its uniqueness nor its impact, but simply because of how it was perceived by a friend and two strangers. Like many of my colleagues, unless the matter is confidential, I have the habit of keeping my office door open while talking to others. A colleague strolled into my office and related the following story, which had just occurred.

Door open, he was in his office talking with a black student from South Africa. Two white maintenance workers from the university were dealing with an electrical problem in the outer office. My friend wanted to make sure that his advisee understood the possible negative consequences of action that the student was about undertake. So, my colleague deliberately and calmly reviewed the problem, discussed proposed action, made sure the student understood the likely consequences, and then advised the student to make the choice. Apparently, the workers overheard the conversation, because after the student left, one of them said to my colleague, "I was really impressed by how kind and patient you were with that student." My friend was surprised and felt good. He observed, however, that without the worker's comment, he would never have given the conversation a second thought.

I was struck by how many chances teachers and professors have to make a difference, sometimes only a small difference, but a difference nevertheless. My takeaway: *A successful day is one in which you help someone succeed.* Teachers are fortunate because they have so many such opportunities. You might routinely ask yourself, "How many people did I help succeed today?"