

Opinion: Don't Blindly Follow Edu-Celebrities



Educator Barnes – 9/4/19

In each profession, there are people who rise to high visibility and prominence. There is an aspect of these people's personalities and abilities that captivate others. The more people are captivated, the more they continue to rise...but should they? They say fake it until you make it, and some are still faking it, taking others along for the ride. Before you get lured away by Edu-celebrities' charm, make sure you aren't getting fooled.

Social media has allowed educators to connect with each other. If you are on Instagram, just type in #TeachersofInstagram, and you will see teacher after teacher in your feed portraying educational excellence. When you peel away the filters and the color-coordinated themed classrooms, are they really offering you any tips of value? I assert some are not. Their sole purpose is to have a hardcore side hustle. Look, I'm not mad; collect your coins, but don't sell easy fixes or an illusion of guidance that you really don't have.

I have a small presence online. One time, an educator came across me in real life, and said, "I heard you can actually teach." I responded, "Excuse me?" The educator went on to say that some educators with huge followings that share small clips of them appearing to be excellent educators are essentially frauds, and could not even teach even with a scripted curriculum.

When teachers are posting online, you are only seeing the final polished product. You are not seeing the outtakes. Don't ask some of them to elaborate on the snippet of a practice they shared. Instead of receiving an actual answer, they will send you positive vibes and a link to their Teachers Pay Teachers store.

What's worse is some of these uplifting educators' actions online don't match their actions in person. I've been at conferences with Edu-celebrities that speak poorly about students in person. Don't try to have a conversation with them about anything meaningful because they will need to get a well-lighted photo for their social media feed first.

Instead of doing research, teachers are out here blindly implementing stuff and failing. I went to a workshop about being culturally responsive where a teacher was in tears because she saw a lot of teachers doing fancy handshakes with students when they entered the classroom, but when she tried, it didn't work. Building strong relationships with students has to be the foundation. Quick fixes from social media won't always work.

No, I'm not suggesting that you unfollow your favorite famous teacher. However, I am asking you to do a gut check. Is that teacher really bringing value to your life as an educator? Will they have a conversation with you without trying to sell you products? If you are starting to feel unsure, maybe look around your school and find a teacher you see every day in real life to follow.