

When A Teacher or Counselor Leaves

by Hilda Johnston

From an adult student's perspective, when a teacher or counselor leaves her position, it has a huge impact. The teacher or counselor has the power to bring out the best in their students. When this happens, a bond is formed between that teacher and the student. The teacher may be the reason why that student comes to class on a regular basis.

When the time has come for the teacher or counselor to move on, you will find that some students accept the change with a heartfelt, "Thank you." Then, there are the students who have a hard time accepting this change. A student who does not fully understand why the teacher or counselor is leaving may take it personally. It is helpful if the teacher can explain *why* she is leaving so that the students know it is not somehow because of them.

Confronting the loss of a teacher or counselor may even result in a student leaving the program. The student asks, "What will I do without you to help me?" This is where that wonderful teacher should take the student aside and ask him to re-



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main in the program and to give himself and the new teacher or counselor a chance.

None of us likes change. We don't like to come out of our comfort zones. But at times, life requires us to do so, and most of the time it is for the best. We move on; we step up.

Hilda Johnston, formerly a student at the Read/Write/Now program in Springfield, MA, is working to get her GED so that she can go to college. She is the mother of three and grandmother of five. She enjoys being back in school, and she encourages others to get a good education and to give the best of themselves in life. She says, "What you put in, you get out. And it will all be worth it in the long run."

Writing and Discussion Questions

Have you had a teacher who left your program? What was that like?

What do you know about the working conditions at your program? How do you think working conditions affect "learning conditions"?

How would you respond to the students (see cartoon on page 34) who said, "If you can't give us what we need, we won't come back"? Write a letter to them.

What would you need from your teacher to make it easier for you if s/he moves on? Write about it.