

Become an Educator!

TIE April 2016 p.20

By *Ettie Zilber*

I am guessing that most high schools offer a program, variously entitled "Career Week" or "Career Planning." Such programs typically invite professionals to the school to speak to the students and describe their professions. Often they are coached to tell the students not only about the "what" of their professions but also the "how," i.e., the route they took to arrive in this position. This is an invaluable opportunity for students to hear a variety of life stories.

Not surprisingly, the list of professions may include medicine, psychology, the therapies, civil or aeronautical engineering, law, jewelry design, architecture, journalism, business, finance, management, music, and many more. I remember being upset when I first realized that the roster of speakers never included educators to speak about a career in education.

I pondered the reason for this program "oversight." Is it because we think it is obvious that students consider a career in education, because they see us at work every day? Is it because we think so poorly of our own profession? Or do we think that parents think poorly of our profession? Perhaps it is a combination of all of the above.

During my own research on the children of international school educators (Zilber 2009), I came across one study conducted in the U.S. which found that educators actually discourage their children from pursuing a career in education (Worsham et al. 2003).

How different from my own findings about our international school arena. My research found that 30 percent of children of international school educators pursue a career in education. This was corroborated by the research of Cottrell (2002). That is a fascinating statistic! Clearly, the children of our educators, who are educated under

the same roof where their parents work, in the same culture and community, are positively impacted by the experience. My new study (Zilber 2015) demonstrates that almost a quarter of international school educators have a history as cross-culture kids (van Reken 2005).

In an effort to inspire more of our students to consider this career, I started participating in Career Week as a self-invited speaker at my schools, describing our path and the decisions that have led us to embrace this fulfilling and noble career. I hope that my words became a catalyst for their career decisions.

I exhort all of you to take every opportunity to speak to your international school students, who are all cross-culture kids, and plant the seed about a future as an educator. We need the "best and the brightest" to ensure that the future generations are the "best and the brightest." ●

Ettie Zilber is Head of School at the International School of Arizona.