



### **Everyone Starts with an “A”!**

By Marilyn J. Dominick, Public School Administrator and NEW Chairperson

As the new school year begins, I recall a TV commercial that depicted a joyous dad shopping for school supplies with his children. The father has a huge smile on his face as he pushes the cart, kicking up his heels as he navigates the school supply aisle. His children follow him with frowning faces and heads down while the music of “It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year” plays loudly. It is a matter of one’s perspective, isn’t it?

While we may find the scenario comical (I know I do!), the reality may be that school is not a positive place for many students who struggle. Many return to school after not being successful in previous years due to a wide variety of circumstances. And, no doubt, they may feel that their failure to succeed will follow them yet again into the new school year.

The situation has some parallels to all of us, as we were lost in our failures (sins) before we found Jesus. The day we made the decision to ask the Savior for forgiveness, he immediately granted us a clean slate and made each person a new creation in him. (See 2 Corinthians 5:17). God granted us a brand-new start! Wow!

#### **A New Beginning**

As we minister to our students this year, remember that some of the students — perhaps most of them — need a new beginning. While we need to assess their skills as they come to us, we must remember to celebrate their strengths and abilities and do what we can to adapt our teaching to capitalize on the things they can do while working gently to remediate where needed.

Successful learning is really a combination of the personal relationship between the teacher and the student and the student's ability to learn. Find out what excites your students, how you might connect with them and the families, and how you might adapt your approach to make success possible. Be patient and forgiving, allowing the struggling student to have a safe place to take risks with their work to move ahead. Convince your students this is a new day and a fresh start. Tell them that your job is to help them find success in school.

Our classrooms are places of true discipleship for Christian educators, and we love and instruct some students who are not so lovable. We may be one step in their journey to find forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

I know that I am thankful to God for my clean slate and for the people who disciplined me in my journey. We can be part of a redemption story for our students as we show them the love and mercy of Jesus as we teach them.

I wish you all the absolute best as you lovingly represent Jesus to your students, their families, and your colleagues this school year.

**Marilyn J. Dominick** lives in Syracuse, New York. She served as superintendent of schools for the Jordan-Elbridge School District and retired in 2017. She currently serves as administrative advisor for public charter schools in the Syracuse area. You may contact Marilyn at [mjdominick77@gmail.com](mailto:mjdominick77@gmail.com).