

Transcribed by Alexis Pinkerton

Dr. David Barry: Welcome to I Still Believe in School, the podcast where the best teachers I know share their wisdom, play trivia games to fundraise for classrooms in need, and above all else, express to you, our listeners, why, despite all the challenges, we still believe in school.

Dr. David Barry: Well, hello there. Thank you so much for tuning in to the intro mini episode of my podcast, I Still Believe in School. I am your host, Dr. Dave Barry. I'm a former kindergarten and preschool teacher turned early childhood teacher educator, and I work as an assistant professor of early childhood education at West Chester University of Pennsylvania.

Dr. David Barry: I've found myself feeling discouraged over the last few years about all the negative messaging I've been hearing about teaching. And don't get me wrong, teaching is hard and teaching is stressful. I actually wrote a book about it based on my dissertation, which was all about teacher stress. But I've learned from my work with college students who are learning to become teachers, that they're hungry for some different messaging. They get that teaching is hard, but they want to know what do teachers love about their jobs. And why do these teachers, despite all of the challenges facing them and their students, still believe in school?

Dr. David Barry: Hearing about this from many of the undergraduate students I work with over the last couple years got me thinking about what I could do to harness my 20 years of knowledge and experience in the field of education, and how could I combine that with the knowledge and expertise of the educators that I admire most to share what we've learned. I wanted to make sure that whatever I did would lovingly center the voices and experiences of everyday educators and provide a space of community, belonging, and hope for teachers.

Dr. David Barry: Additionally, I wanted to find a way to proactively provide financial support to teachers who are making a difference in the lives of their students. After thinking about how I might go about doing this, a podcast felt like the right way to do it. It certainly felt like the most fun.

Dr. David Barry: So with that said, every episode of I Still Believe in School will be just around 30 minutes. The perfect length to listen to when you're getting ready for work or you're on your commute. The format of each episode will include conversations with my education heroes about their teaching experiences, their best advice, and most importantly, why they still believe in school. After I chat with my guests, we play a game I created with the help of ChatGPT called Teacher Feature Trivia, a 10-question game show fundraiser that helps teachers get the resources they need from their DonorsChoose projects.

For every question my guest gets right, I donate \$10 to the DonorsChoose project that they are working to support. Now, if you haven't heard of DonorsChoose, it's a non-profit organization that invites teachers to post projects they're trying to fund for their classrooms. Everything from pencils to classroom furniture. Donors then go on to the teachers' fundraising pages and give money to help them reach their goals.

Dr. David Barry: It's a truly fantastic program, and one that I've benefited from personally as a teacher. In fact, when I was a kindergarten teacher in Boston, I posted several DonorsChoose projects. One of them, I got brand new tables and chairs for my students, and another one, I got brand new beautiful wooden cubby lockers so that my students would have a place to keep their coats, their backpacks, and their lunchboxes.

Dr. David Barry: I should mention that this won't be the most polished or produced podcast you've ever listened to. In fact, I can promise you that. I'm learning how to do all of this as I go. I do all the sound editing and engineering and recording. I compose and perform all of the music, and I'm currently self-funding the DonorsChoose donations for the teachers my guests select to support.

Dr. David Barry: So if you are listening and you are a sponsor, hello and help! You can learn more about me, the podcast, my guests, and the teachers we're working to support on my website, istillbelieveinschool.com. I'll post a new episode every Monday on my website, but you'll also be able to listen to I Still Believe in School on whatever podcast platform you use.

Dr. David Barry: I'm also working on an Instagram page, and we'll link that on the website soon. Again, I'm doing this on my own and have a full-time job as a college professor, so I appreciate y'all's patience and support as I figure all of this out.

Dr. David Barry: You should also know or maybe be warned that I am a sunny, optimistic, almost Pollyanna-ish kind of person. Sometimes when people first meet me, they wonder if I'm for real, and I have to say that what you see is what you get. This is me.

Dr. David Barry: I know there are so many things that need to be changed about school, and so many things that are wrong, but I believe when we focus on everything that's wrong, we lose sight of what is working, what is going well, and why we, despite everything that's wrong, still believe in and have hope for school. I think this is probably from my years as a teacher, trying to find ways to harness my students' strengths to help them grow in

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areas they needed more support in, and I'm applying that same mindset to what I'm trying to do here. How can we as teachers, educators, and people who care about what's happening in school, utilize what's going well to address what's not?

Dr. David Barry: If you're looking for stinking thinking, this probably won't be the podcast for you. I love laughing, I love kids, I love teachers, I'm a little loud, and I'm going to bring all the Mr. Rogers vibes I can to this podcast. One final thing I want to share before I wrap up this intro mini episode is why I still believe in school.

Dr. David Barry: I still believe in school because I believe in Gen Z. I had them when they were kindergartners, and I have them now again as college students. I'm so deeply moved by how so many of my students express their commitment and dedication to becoming teachers. And as their professor, it's the honor of a lifetime getting to watch them teach their very first lessons to the students they work with, and it gives me so much hope to see how hardworking and committed they are to being the best teachers that they can be.

Dr. David Barry: Okay, well, I think that's enough about me, and I hope you get the idea of what I'm trying to accomplish here every week on the I Still Believe in School podcast. If you like the podcast or know people who will enjoy it, please share it with them to help get the word out. And again, take a look at my website, istillbelieveinschool.com. Thanks so much, y'all.