

Educators Praise *Alphabet Meditations*

“Although I do not do much reading for pleasure, I could not stop reading *Alphabet Meditations for Teachers*. Its brief, concise, poetic style makes it an easy, relaxing read. The author’s love for teachers, children, and the differences that exist among us clearly came through. I absolutely recommend this book as preferred reading for the Master Teacher.”

—Doug Rogers, Executive Director
Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)

“*Alphabet Meditations for Teachers* is an inspirational must-read for educators, as well as others who work with children in non-academic settings—social workers, nurses, and child care givers. Actually everyone who interacts with young people will find this book a treasure of wise advice for communicating compassionately with youth.”

—Judy Farmer, Executive Director
Texas School Public Relations Association

“*Alphabet Meditations for Teachers* is a thoughtful, inspiring, and well done piece—a perfect gift for teachers. It accurately reflects some of the most haunting thoughts excellent teachers have, overworked, yet caring as they struggle with all the demands of their jobs.”

—Sherry Anderson, Adjunct instructor at Central Michigan University, and a retired school administrator.

“*Alphabet Meditations for Teachers* is a most needed antidote to the toxic side effects of our accumulated reactions to institutional rigidity and regimentation. Free of pretentiousness, Nancy Oelklaus’ meditations are at once grounded in lucid accounts of teacher experience and courageous devotions to authentic work and love.”

—Caroline Eick, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Education Department
Mount St. Mary's University, Emmitsburg, MD

“*Alphabet Meditations* provides powerful tools for supporting the important work that teachers do every minute of every day. Many of the poems provide a respite and a space for reflection. They provide another perspective and reveal assumptions we make from our experiences. They help us refresh, reflect, renew, and rethink. We need to arise anew each day for the children!”

—De Ann Currin, PhD
Elliott Elementary School Principal, Lincoln, NE

“*Alphabet Meditations* is poetry that speaks about the essence of teaching. It will touch your heart and soul so that you may better connect to the hearts, minds, and souls of all those you teach. As you read and reflect upon these meditations may they nourish your soul and remind you why you choose to teach.”

—Cindy Isaacson
Special Education Teacher, Austin, TX

“Dr. Oelklaus’s *Alphabet Meditations for Teachers* is a gentle, but firm, reminder that we need to meet the needs of students for them to learn...and they are not all the same. Her meditations provide insight into building resilience, holding high expectations for all – no excuses, and for attending to the gifts those children bring to the classroom... she pushes teachers toward serving the head and heart needs of all children with excellence, compassion, and responsibility.”

—Sandra K Darling, PhD,
Learning Bridges, Chandler, AZ

“*Alphabet Meditations for Teachers* by Nancy Oelklaus tugs at the heart strings of all teachers who yearn for wisdom in seeking the answers to those struggles and frustrations faced by our profession. Read it to learn, read it to grow, read it to remember.”

—Sherry Henderson, Principal
Trinity Episcopal School, Marshall, TX

Alphabet Meditations for Teachers



Nancy Delklaus, EdD

Alphabet Meditations for Teachers: Everyday Inspiration
for Educators

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To my mentors,
Pat Smith and Grace Grimes,
women of intelligence, courage, and heart

And to my students
who accepted the gift I had to give.

About the Author

A native of southwest Oklahoma, Nancy Oelklaus began her career as a high school English teacher in Marshall, Texas. She earned the B.A. in Communications, cum laude, from Oklahoma Baptist University, the M.A. in English from the University of North Texas and the doctorate in educational administration from Texas A&M University, Commerce, where she was named an outstanding graduate.



For nine years she served as assistant superintendent for instructional services in Marshall, TX, followed by nine years as executive director for the Texas Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Throughout her career, Nancy has been a speaker and workshop leader throughout the U.S. She has also conducted workshops in Jakarta, Indonesia, Singapore, and The Netherlands. Also, she has designed and facilitated processes for developing school boards.

Her articles have appeared in *The American School Board Journal*, *The Austin Business Journal*, *The Systems Thinker*, and *Austin Woman Magazine*. She is the author of *Journey from Head to Heart: Living and Working Authentically* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Loving Healing Press, 2008). Three coaching CDs by Nancy are available through Amazon.

The Invisible School

When people think of school, the image that comes to mind are the buildings, the classes, the activities, the books and lessons. But beyond all of that is the invisible school—the billions of neuronal patterns that each of us is carrying around inside our heads. How we think about school. How we feel about each other while we are at school. The electromagnetic fields that each of us is sending and receiving. This is the invisible school.

When I was a school administrator, I used to marvel that a student who behaved perfectly in one teacher’s class would be a “holy terror” for another instructor. Now I understand a wee bit more about the electromagnetic field that each one of us emits. I’ve learned from observing my own relationships that things go better when I’m thinking and feeling positively toward the other person. I’ve learned that when I shift the energy in myself through adjusting my thinking, the problem “out there” dissipates.

The challenge is to reframe or tell ourselves a different story about the people around us so that we can work with them well. When this happens, students become more teachable; colleagues become more congenial; school becomes a happier place to be.

I wish I had known this when I was teaching in the classroom. I wish I had known it as an administrator. I didn’t. I thought my most important job was to achieve goals and objectives—to teach the curriculum. But now I understand that the curriculum is only one strand of the work. The other is inspiring students to integrate that curriculum into their memory and operational systems. The teacher’s role is to integrate head and heart so that students both achieve and become confident human beings who know they are valued. May these meditations inspire you to be a power for good in your school.

A to Z

Alpha and Omega—
Beginning and End—
Circular, Cyclical
Meaning,

Deafened by
Clocks, Papers, and Bells.

Look me up—
To the circular stars—
The cyclical orbs—
To know I matter.

Look me up—
To the circular/slanted
Eyes that trust me—
To know they matter.

A is for Adam

His name is Adam;
Her name is Eve.
Surname doesn't matter.
They are All Children.
They are My Children—
Not mine—
Ours.

I am their leader,
Their guide.
Not their master.
They trust me.

They trust me to love
The shape—
Or color—
Of their eyes and hair.

They trust me to see their
Natural beauty, hiding behind
Designer labels—expensive goods
On their feet—or backs.

They trust me not to care
That their clothes come
From charity.

They trust me not to try
To fix them,
But to love them.

To love their tough swagger
Until they let their brains
And hearts relax.



A

To love them into knowing,
Thinking, creating,
Believing that they can.

They trust me to choose well
What I teach them.
They trust me to sense when
It's not working, and change.

They trust me to know there is
More than one way to learn.

They trust me not to give up on them,
Even though they make it tough,
And it would be so easy
To walk away.

I'm here for a purpose.
They trust me;
I'm worthy of their trust.

Fill me today with
Creative strength of
Creative trust.
Help me trust them,

B is for Bells

Bells are driving me nuts.

They control my
Every move—decision.
I hear them in my dreams—
Or nightmares.

They stop thought
With their shrill—
Or soft—
Intrusion.



My eyes move from
The eyes of the souls before me
To the clock on the wall,
And I shirk their questions

Or stall, saying,
“We’ll continue tomorrow.”
But tomorrow, the moment is gone.
I—or they—forget.

The clock is not
My master,
Nor am I its slave,
Unless I will it.

Find for me
Alternatives to
Rigidity—
To Mechanistic Models.

Give me the courage
To ask the question,
What can we do
About bells?

Give me the freedom
Of mind and heart
To find
Solutions.



C Is for Change

Change is such a
Normal part of my
Daily existence.
Why do I resist it so—
Within?

In the schoolyard, I watch
The differential effects of
Differential elements—
Rain, heat, light.

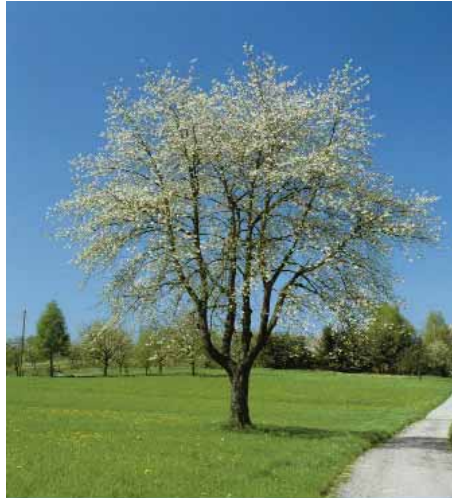
As seasons march across
My life, I welcome—
Embrace—each one for the
Freshness—rebirth—it brings.

Is any spring the
Same as the last?
Azaleas are brighter or
Dimmer or thinner.

Bluebonnets are more—
Or less—plentiful,
More—or less—
Tall or thick.

In my home I search for
Variety—betterment—
With new or rearranged
Furnishings—appliances.

The children I teach change
Daily. I watch them lose a
Tooth—or survive the First Date.





So why—oh why—am I
So reluctant to change
My lesson plan?
The way I teach?

I understand that
Holding my craft firm
Is unnatural—
Clinging to false security.

It's forcing myself not to
Grow, like Chinese women
Who bound their daughters'
feet.

Help me not do that

To myself—or these
Dear Children I teach.
Help me—today—
To grow.



D Is for Do

The “don’t” messages
Assail us.
We’re the pinball,
Trying to get to the highest hole,
Buffeted by barriers
Clanging, DON’T!
When we hit them.

As a pinball,
I would like it better
If someone would
Whisper the DO’S to me
So I don’t have to
Discover the DON’TS
So rudely.

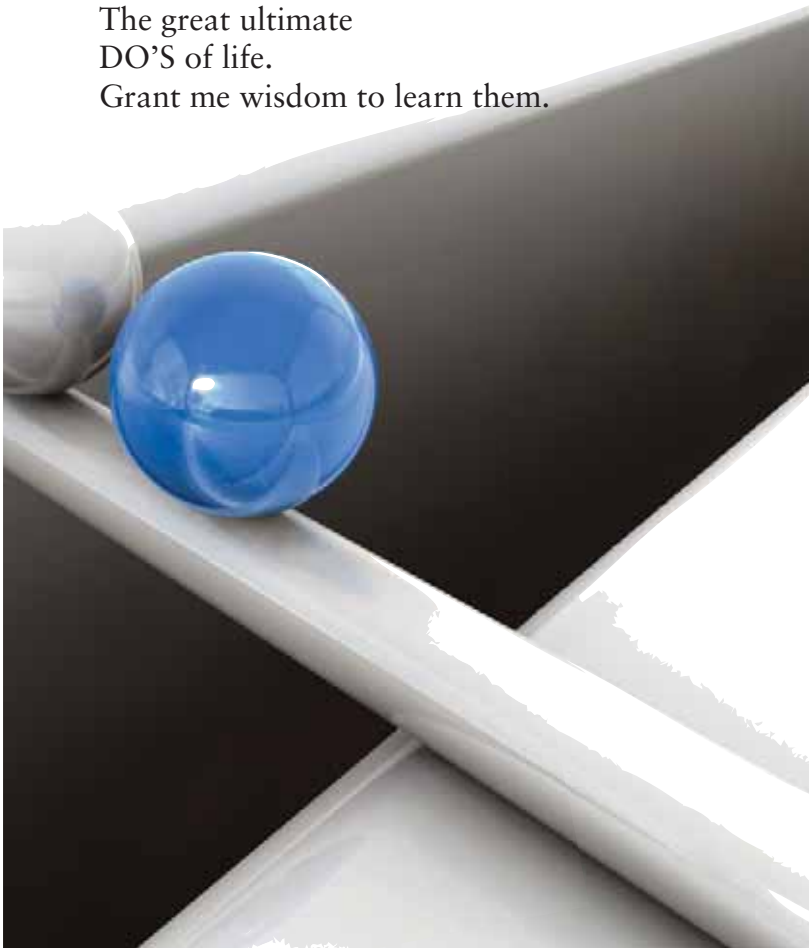
Help me ask for the
DO’S when I feel myself
Chafing against the DON’TS
Help me listen
To my students’ voices
And hearken to their eyes
As they ask me.

Where are the DO’S?
DO trust the spirit
Within me to
Love me and tell me
The right thing to do.
DO love and value
Who I am.



DO accept others
Just as they are.
DO open my mind to learn,
Knowing God is my guide,
To help me sort the
Junk from the valuables.
DO accept that guidance.

Help me live these words
Today—just today.
Help me teach, through a
Living model,
The great ultimate
DO'S of life.
Grant me wisdom to learn them.



E Is for Excellence

Excellence is a word
I keep hearing.
When it's spoken,
We all nod and agree.

No one ever asks,
“What is it?”
We pretend to know it
And do it.

But if we're doing it,
Why are people screaming
At us
That we're not?

Help me realize
That the child
Whose look could kill
Is telling me

He doesn't think
My work
Looks like excellent,
So she's checked out—

Mentally—spiritually—
Personally—and completely.
Help me realize
I can't declare excellence

And ignore the
Eyes of the
Sons and daughters
Daily before me.

