

Samira Elfilaly

# No child Left Behind

*What Do American Teachers  
Do To Engineer Students' Success?!*





*Start today,  
not tomorrow!*

*If anything, you should have started yesterday –*

Emil Motycka



## Map of the book

“Preface” a page torn from my diary	
A typical day at school .....	7
About me .....	11
About the book,	
A letter I would always cherish .....	13
Case study tackling the NCLB issue .....	19
Acknowledgements .....	25
Chapter 1	
Engineering Failure,	
Or Brain unfriendly classroom .....	29
Chapter 2	
Nastassia or the most important	
lesson about the act of learning.....	43
Chapter 3	
What do effective	
American teachers do that I don't?.....	65

Chapter 4	
Evaluating Needs.....	91
Chapter 5	
Teaching alternatives.....	109
Chapter 6	
The fast lane.....	135
Chapter 7	
Contextual factors.....	147
Chapter 8	
The American principal or the new businessman .....	165
Chapter 9	
Mission statement, vision, values and goals .....	177
Chapter 10	
Class Management.....	185
Chapter 11	
Mission, Vision and Philosophy of teaching.....	209
Chapter 12	
No ending to the journey towards self development.....	223
My horse of Troy.....	225

## Preface

*Torn from my diary*

*A typical day of my life (at school)*

*The bell has just rung! It's the ten O'clock break.*

*I get into the room, head towards the desk.*

*Some students are standing at the back of the class.*

*They are talking passionately (translate "loudly")*

*Others are sitting on their desks, (which they know is a "no, no" but today, I am Zen, I choose to keep quiet.*

*Just as I am about to put my bag on the chair, Chahid yells to get my attention, "hey, Teachah", he says mockingly, reminding me of the song he presented some weeks before:*

*"hey, teacher, leave them kids alone!". "dada!" He sings, dragging a textbook from his school bag on the chair behind him. He waves it in the air as if it were a victory token.*

*– ... You said I would forget it again"!*

*I ask doubtfully with the threat of a grin that I try to push back with a frown:*

*“Is it yours?”*

*You told me I’d forget it and I just didn’t” he answered back!*

*I ask again, stressing every syllable:” Is it Yours?”*

*– “Well, I brought it and that’s the point! He replies with a smile!*

*I smile back and shake my head looking at the roof to imply that he is incurable.*

*“At least” I thought “... he uses English all the time”*

*The second bell.*

*The break is over.*

*Some students however do not seem to care. The hallway is still jammed with students. Madam Zohri tries, but in vain to urge them into the various classes they belong to. In my room, some students are still standing while others are still chatting, heedless that the instruction time has started. I urge them “Have a seat please!”. I might as well talk to the walls.*

*Zineb and her “team” are trying some new vanity tips, she raises her eyebrows towards me and grins “Madam, it is still the break time”. I feign not to hear.*

*I threaten to take her vanity magazine if she does not hide it. She complies with a groan. Mona, coming from the outside – apparently pushed by madam Zohri – walks in a hurry towards me “Oh Madam, if you*



*knew what happened” she says in a tear-some voice. She gives me a hug and starts confiding ...*

*Chahid is trying to kill someone at the back of the class. I freak out, already imagining the worse, not really caring about the poor kid but rather about my reputation as a teenager – sitter. “Chahid stop it” I yell, almost pushing Mona aside. I heard the splash of my zen attitude in the water.*

*“Don’t worry madam, he is a thick skin”. I ask the unwelcome guest to leave the room. Five minutes are wasted. A couple of students are still standing. Mona is still telling me about her terrible story and her mother who “hates” her. I ask her to tell me more at the break. She grins but gives in. Ouf! The tardiests are finally seated.*

*10 minutes wasted.*

*According to the recent research based studies, ten minutes of instruction wasted equal eighteen days of instruction robbed from students.*

*What would they say if they knew that I am just getting started ...*

*The world’s history has been impacted by “weirdoes”. So, in every class, I do all I can to make these weirdoes feel at home and shine with their classmates and do not allow anyone to stay behind.*

*Weirdoes are those people who did not choose to be different.*

they did not ask for it: they were born like that, mismatching the generally agreed-on mould. There are only 2 /° normal people in the world, says I. Fortunately. The others are just simulating normal instead of cultivating their inner wealth self-denied.

With zero tolerance for intolerance and a twice-a-year projects against bullying, I can boast that my class is a safe hide-away for creative beings; but on the other hand, it's a true nightmare where unstoppable chatting can be a threat for the nerves. My stoic attempts not to yell and keep a refined poise seldom win.

It's worth telling these kids that just being different is not faulty in itself, and that all depends on the outcome they want to achieve. The change they are Keen on bringing about!

If they take the time to think of others, if they act not always – only for their own sake and have global dreams ...

Then, there is nothing wrong with them, or not really (smiling is requested at this stage) I can even assert more than that, we only have to help them be the best they can be and not stay Behind!

My diary entitled “No child stays behind” emulated from “no child left behind” is a journey – if you allow me to take you with me – intended to seek better teaching alternatives. It investigates taken for granted “truths” based on the teaching lore.

## About me

My infatuation about the written words on paper or cardboard started at the age of five. I was in a French school, run by nuns in Beau Sejour: we-kids-were allowed to hold books and turn pages on our own. I felt important because at home, books and encyclopedias were an honor for the eldest siblings who could refrain from tearing the displayed images. Older, I became fonder of that holy magic of allowing characters to take me where they are, to live their stories, To be them! When I joined a scout campus at the age of ten; telling stories became a must-have skill since night entertainment by campfire relied on it. Later on, as a sophomore, I dedicated my writing skills to help my peers with challenging French essays before I gained notoriety for writing some of the most moving *break up* love letters in French. Mr Vertan, my French teacher intercepted one of them during his class. He was so impressed by the strength of the message that he forgot to ask me out, instead he

encouraged me to write stories and this was the beginning.

On my sixtieth birthday, the founder of “Barbara Cartland book club” Fatima Idoudre, my closest friend and neighbor in l’Oasis and the most amazing buddy you may think of, offered me the joy of my life when I saw my diary in l’ Oasis bookshop window: she had asked our neighborhood bookshop keeper to put it there as a birthday gift; My wish to picture myself as a globally recognized author came true!

## **Achievements**

2013 Joined the Coaching Academy in London

2008 Donated 1000 copy of my NCLB, “what do American teachers do to engineer students success”

2007 got the Fulbright ILEP grant and a stay in Missouri for about 6 months

2005 founder of B-Great Academy. Committed to the cause of children in underserved areas, empowering them to reach their highest potential

2001 UME grant

Purpose in life: Behavioracy or behavior literacy to bring about positive change by enabling young participants to see the benefits of good manners and the positive impact of earning one’s own esteem via a life of meaning and purpose instead of yielding to passivity and vampire self talk.

## **About the book**

### **A letter I would always cherish**

*I had published “what do American teachers do to engineer students’ success” in 2008 a year after I got the Fulbright ILEP grant. It is based on my gains as an intern in Cape Central high school. The rhetoric of NCLB hit a tilt in my heartbeats. It was as if I had someone else think and plan for me while reading my potential project. The No Child Left Behind act was standing in favor of the same cause I had been fighting for since 1991 when I began my ongoing research on students’ expectations at La faculte des sciences de L’education tutored by Dr Berrada Souad.*

*In 2001, I rekindled the torch with the UME award. My stay in a Boston University campus offered me loads of opportunities to enrich my thoughts. I had, by then, started my professional diary in an attempt to answer “why misbehavior occurs and how to prevent it” in the classroom or outside. I had been looking for*

answers since then. I got encouraged by Hala Taouil, Ray Matsumiya and other prominent teachers in Boston. They provided all participants with unparalleled support. I hadn't heard *about the NCLB at that time but all professors met there shared my dream of a world where all children were empowered by knowledge to be successful.*

*The selfish wish behind the book was to get published and win the Mohamed IV Moroccan Book prize of the on-going year. I used to repeat that slogan as a bedtime ritual with the strong feeling I had been there:*

*If members of the jury need only two winners, then one of them was going to be me!*

*How modest is that!*

*Cold shower! I was upset to learn that pedagogy was not accepted as a literary genre; so it kind of cooled down the desire to publish the book but did not kill the drive to look for solutions for class disruptions.*

*Because of my thirst to get some recognition as a worthy global contributor in education, I began looking for international book prizes as well, but here again I lacked the knowledge resources to do so! (where, how etc.).*

*A stubborn fighter Never gives up and as such, I opted for workshops to share the gains of my internship with Ms Nations and my shadowing of some American learners. I needed to deserve my own hug.*

*The book got celebrated by superiors, colleagues and friends in the Moroccan educational field but it was not enough for me!*

*I wanted copies of my book in Harvard university library because I would never be able to study there. I envisioned my book reviewed by New York Times' toughest literary critic and getting victorious out of the screening. I wanted a copy to be read by Laura Bush after I had seen a glittering star in her eyes while listening with great interest to a little boy in a school library.*

*My own NCLB was meant as an instance of the cherished American "Extra Mile" paying for my reward forward".*

*In Morocco, writing books, organizing workshops for students and similar extra curricular activities are not rated" The principal told me to comfort me when I did not get any feedback for my donation: I had donated all the copies for the benefit of teachers. 700 copies sent to Rabat, for the Ministry of Moroccan education via the bureau of research and continuous development in Rabat thanks to Mr Slitine. 250 copies were sent to the Academy of Great Casablanca. I personally did the delivery and the others left were offered to teachers of English I had met during my workshops. I am still waiting for a reply.*

*My desire to get feedback for my efforts was higher than covering the publishing expenses, so the donation was triggered by a selfish desire to increase my*

*readership: “everybody” had to have my book and I wanted to make sure, money issues won’t stand as a pretext for not having a copy of my own NCLB!*

*I was so sure, someone, somewhere would ultimately appreciate my journey-to-better-teaching log notes, and would find it in his heart to take time to validate my efforts by sending me a sign as a reward from the universe...*

*Sir Daoud Casewit (president of the Moroccan-American Commission for Educational and Cultural Exchange, in 2008) was one of the very few people who were so kind as to give me their empowering Written feedback! It made my life!*

Dear Professor El Filaly,

Salamatu ‘Llahi’ alakum.

Many sincere thanks for the gifts you dropped off at the MACECE offices (copies of the book). I was touched by your letter, and pleased to have another copy of your fascinating, informative book. The volume contains a lot of distilled wisdom, and amazing highlights of brilliant pedagogical principles and best practices. You have every right to be proud of this accomplishment.

I actually think, it would merit being translated into Arabic and French, so that greater numbers of Moroccan educators could benefit from it.



I have sent the copy of your book, with the folder and your letter to the American Embassy as requested.

With all the best for the coming New Year,

Daoud

*Daoud Stephen Casewit*

*Great people deal with you like you were great too!*

His sentence: *"I actually think, it would merit being translated into Arabic and French, so that greater numbers of Moroccan educators could benefit from it"* equaled my joy had I earned an A+ from New York times *most feared literary critic. I have pinned it on my achievement board.*

It compensated lack of feedback from Moroccan authorities in education and the world at large.

It sincerely felt like a million dollar:

It was the book prize I had been seeking, the promotion I did not get.

Yes, definitely, Great people deal with you like you were great too.

I was going through my emails lately when I spotted his starred message, marked as unread and my phoenix dreams got up from their ashes. I decided to get my book on line so that I could get feedback from international readers, writers and educators and who knows at last prize for my efforts as an educator.



## **Case study tackling the NCLB issue**

In 2001, the newly elected President George W. Bush and his team refined an already existent Act (ESEA) Elementary and Secondary education Act into NCLB: Federal money was no longer to be taken for granted. His mission was to reward proficiency and to urge struggling schools to increase students' academic performance by setting high standards state wise.

Since accountability is key to improvement, schools had to prove that learning is taking place: Measurable goals had to be established. All children are given the needed means and tools to succeed. Disadvantaged learners are given more learning opportunities to catch up with their peers and improve their grades. On the counterpart, they all have to submit learning tasks/ outcomes or achievements that meet certain standards... For failing schools, sanctions ranged from reconstruction of staff to school closure. Fair enough, you get the money, show us the results! Seal the deal.

Despite all the presumed weaknesses of the NCLB act, it is a good example of the fact that the American System is more powerful than the individual. Educators build on previous research based studies which have proven to be effective. Those who come after will always construct on what their predecessors have come up with, even in politics.

The Moroccan system, however is weaker than the individual. It is like the story of our poor pavements in Casablanca. The last man in charge puts down the previous innovations. The number of modifications is there to testify that we lack consistency, a clear common goal and a vision as a nation. A taxi driver told me the story of a crossroad in his neighborhood, whenever he (talking about the man in charge) wants to marry one of his daughters, the shape of the crossroad is put down and remodeled. 3 times now” He was happy though, he added “thanks God, this is the last one, so we all hope in Derb.... He ’ll leave it alone and we may have some rest until his son is ready for university”.

As most developing countries, in Morocco we worship the man in power more than the system we ought to abide by and we lack a forward image or vision of what we need to achieve down the road. Mom used to tell us “if you see a man riding a mule, tell him, “Good horse”. Well, I see her point but it reflects the blinders we use and the hinders we establish for our own progress.