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As I mentioned in an earlier update, I have the opportunity of working with a group of outstanding colleagues and ministry partners, and love sharing articles from their regional updates. This article is from Anne Rauser, who serves as the Regional Director for Western Canada. I trust it will be a blessing to you.

It's not rocket science. When you look inside the walls of extraordinary schools, you see extraordinary teachers. They are driven by a compelling belief that they can make a difference in the lives of their students. They are convinced that every part of their work is meaningful. They have mastered their subject areas and are convinced their students can too. They are doing an exceptional job because they are passionate about their calling. They are intent on being a positive role model. They motivate and inspire everyone in their sphere of influence. They are humble in motives, but not in their example. They are the spark that sets others aflame. They meet the challenges of limited resources with innovative approaches. They let their imaginations flow and create value in the classroom without spending more money to do it. They succeed, not because of their situation, but in spite of it. Extraordinary teachers do exceptional work and subsequently they feel exceptional. Their accomplishments contribute greatly to their personal satisfaction. Ultimately they raise school morale and positively influence the school culture.

Extraordinary teachers are simply doing the ordinary tasks with focused enthusiasm and intentionality. No job is too small to be done well. They consistently reflect on life in the classroom. They ask what has gone well and what could be improved. They analyze past experiences and learn from their mistakes. They ask themselves probing questions: What people have most shaped my life? What did I learn from them? Whom do I admire the most? Which of their skills and characteristics would I like to develop in my life? Then they seek ways to grow and develop accordingly.

Extraordinary teachers think deeply and creatively about how to engage their students in a meaningful learning experience. They write down good ideas as they come to them and file them for future reference. Many good ideas are not implemented and simply die because they are forgotten in the pressure cooker of the modern classroom.

Extraordinary teachers know that good teaching is all around them. They seek out what the best educators are doing and reflect on their practices. They consistently learn from others, and adapt and apply. They understand that the key is to *adapt*, to take good ideas from every source and then apply them with their own unique and creative flair. They understand that if they just copy what other capable teachers are doing, they'll only do as well as they do. They set their sights a little higher. They continually strive to improve and tailor good ideas and make them fit in their environment. Extraordinary teachers are truly innovative and are always on a quest to revolutionize the ordinary.

Extraordinary teachers understand balance. They know they can't do everything in an extraordinary manner, so they set manageable goals. They plan one extraordinary thing a day—maybe just one extraordinary lesson, or one thoughtful remark to a fellow teacher, or one unexpected act of service to a student that may turn his life in a positive direction. One extraordinary act a day isn't overwhelming. It is doable by everyone.

Extraordinary teachers compete with themselves. They set a benchmark, measuring how far they've come and where they want to go. They keep track of the ordinary things they attempt to make extraordinary and evaluate how successful they have been. They know that evaluating accomplishment gives them a way to fine-tune their efforts for maximum impact. Extraordinary teachers have a strong commitment to continuous improvement.

I am convinced that each and every teacher can choose to do his or her job in an extraordinary way, regardless of the circumstances. Each morning you can start with a fresh slate. You can make your days at school anything you choose them to be. Here are some questions for you to ponder—think deeply and answer them honestly. Do you move your school closer to or further from its mission? Do you perform your work in an ordinary way or do you execute it superbly? Do

you lighten your principal's burden or add to it? Do you lift other teachers up or put them down? Always remember that nobody can prevent you from choosing to be exceptional. Nobody can prevent you from turning the ordinary into extraordinary. At the end of the day the only question that matters is, what kind of difference did you make? Faithfully doing your best, independent of the support, acknowledgement or reward of others is a key determinant in a fulfilling, God glorifying career. **And don't forget that extraordinary schools have extraordinary teachers and you can surely be one of them.**